

**A HISTORY OF THE INTEREST IN AND STUDY OF ANCIENT EGYPT  
FROM AN AFRICAN-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE**

**A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS**

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**ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**JULY 1995**

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis will present the history of the interest in and study of ancient Egypt particularly, and the Nile Valley, in general, from an African-centered perspective. Many scholars studying Africa often use a European frame of reference oriented essentially to "European studies of Africa."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the matter of motive and interpretation of scholars is important when studying topics in African history. The African-centered perspective is an analytical method that allows a scholar to put African ideas at the center of inquiry. This method seeks to use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths and terms of discourse that reinforce the centrality of African concepts and interests as a legitimate frame of reference for gathering and analyzing data. An African-centered perspective differs from a Western interpretation of history by honoring Africans within an interpretation of African history, both continentally and diasporically.<sup>2</sup> African-centeredness is maintained by

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<sup>1</sup>Molefi Kete Asante, Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1990), 6.

<sup>2</sup>The word 'African' is used interchangeably with African American. The designation African American refers to the American experience of a particular group of African people.

expressing the study of African phenomena and events in the cultural voice of African people. As a method, it provides a means for the interpretation of history based on the evidence and data secured by reference to the African world experience. In essence, an African-centered perspective is a paradigm that is used to analyze aspects of the history and culture of Africa and her people, maintaining the interest, image and self definition of Africans as central in documenting the related subject areas.<sup>3</sup> In the interest of historical inquiry, it is necessary to consider the epistemological factors that led to the need and importance of an African-centered study of Egypt. Therefore, this document will chronicle the events and survey the historical scenarios that gave rise to an African-centered approach. In terms of the African-centered perspective, as here defined, this study explores the historical significance of African World people and their relationship to the ancient Nile Valley culture. This investigation will chronicle responses of African World scholars to certain historical premises, concepts and conclusions established by Europeans during the period of their domination of African people.

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In spite of their being geographically located in America at this time, they still are African. 'African World scholars' is a term used to refer collectively to African World scholars, both autochthonous and diasporic.

<sup>3</sup>Asante, 5-12.

Once the opportunity arrived for Africans to participate in the scholarly assessment of the African heritage, many Africans addressed and revised the prevailing Eurocentrically slanted portrayal of the African past, particularly of the Nile Valley civilizations and the Valley's cultural continuities. Specifically, the reclamation by African world scholars of ancient Egyptian achievement as part of the total African heritage is treated in this thesis under three aspects. First is the early African response to European claims that ancient Egyptians were white-skinned people conforming to the accepted European somatic phenotype. The second aspect presents an analysis of a sophisticated scholarly research interest by African scholars who utilize much of the scientific method to substantiate their claims regarding the essential Africanity of ancient Egypt. The third topic of discussion is the application of ancient Egyptian religious principles as a spiritual path and an esoteric means of alleviating social ills within the African world community. The exploration of these three major areas of interest in ancient Egyptian culture reveals, to some extent, ancient Egyptian awareness among African people, both contemporary and of the recent past.

An African-centered perspective assumes that the ancient Egyptians were an African people, rather than a European or Asian people, and vindicates the Egyptian cultural tradition as an African historical legacy. This viewpoint is perceived

by scholars in some academic circles as polemical. For example, scholars such as Howard Adelson, Mary Lefkowitz and Arthur Schlesinger do not support the view of an African Egypt.<sup>4</sup> They posit that the orthodox historical tradition that portrays ancient Egyptians as Europeans has been betrayed. The views of Adelson, Lefkowitz and Schlesinger have been seen as biased by many Africanists of ancient Egypt, thereby giving rise and validity to a vindicationist tradition and alternative research methods.<sup>5</sup>

African-centered revisionists of ancient Egyptian history have had as their central claim that the ancient Egyptians were Africans and that the Egyptian people originated in the Southern region of present day Egypt in the Sudan. Immanuel Wallerstein has remarked that perhaps the issue of the ethnic identity of the ancient Egyptians would not have been important if so much controversy had not been made of the subject during the period of European colonization. He noted that the non-existence of African achievement was an idea that was essential for ideological architects of colonialism who attempted to attribute the world's cultural advancement generally to Europeans and other non-Africans. So it was

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<sup>4</sup>Tony Martin, The Jewish Onslaught: Dispatches From the Wellesley Battlefield (Dover, DE: Majority Press, 1993), 54-66.

<sup>5</sup>St. Clair Drake, Black Folk Here and There, vol. 1 (Los Angeles: University of California, 1991), 2.

confidently asserted that the Khamitians were European, or more European than African.<sup>6</sup> Wallerstein comments that, for the purpose of discussing the African past:

...the best evidence of today seems to indicate a very great racial intermingling, in Africa as elsewhere, over the past five thousand years, and that the "Egyptians" or "Hamites" of yesteryear might well find themselves classified as Negroes today, in precisely those countries where classifications matter. Suffice it further to say that many of the archaeological remains of which we shall speak, at first credited to "Arabs" or "Hamites" have on closer, or less biased, inspection, turned out to be unmistakably Negro-African in origin.<sup>7</sup>

Many views of African-centered revisionists are substantiated by eyewitness accounts, recent scholarly studies and re-evaluation of several Egyptian cultural relics. The Greek historian Herodotus, who visited Egypt circa 450 B.C.E., noted that Egyptians had "black skins and woolly hair."<sup>8</sup> In addition to this statement, Herodotus' researches provide evidence regarding the Egyptians' physical appearance and ethnic affinity. Concerning some women diviners whose presence at Dodona was recorded by reference to black doves, Herodotus writes:

...[T]he story which the people of Dodona tell about the doves came, I should say, from the fact

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<sup>6</sup>Immanuel Wallerstein, Africa: The Politics of Independence (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 12-13.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Herodotus The Histories 2. 104.



that the women were foreigners, whose language sounded to them like the twittering of birds; later on the dove spoke with a human voice, because by that time the woman had stopped twittering and learned to talk intelligibly. That at least, is how I should explain the obvious impossibility of a dove using the language of men. As to the bird being black, they merely signify by this that the woman was an Egyptian.<sup>9</sup>

Physical appearance has also been a matter of importance to Egyptologist Cheikh Anta Diop, who has given considerable attention to the ethnicity of the Egyptians. Diop has used osteological remains, melanin samples from mummies, blood groupings, anthropology, linguistics and history to draw major conclusions about Egyptian ethnicity. He found that the skin of Egyptian mummies had a melanin content comparable to that of a present-day African. Diop also declared that the population of Pharaonic Egypt was African and did not significantly decline as a majority population until the Persian conquest of Northeast Africa in the seventh century B.C.E. Utilizing iconography and physical anthropology, he maintained that the Egyptians were Africoid in appearance and more importantly, Diop utilized Egyptian paintings to document the Egyptians as they saw and defined themselves.<sup>10</sup>

According to Diop, the word 'Khamit' was applied by the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 2. 57

<sup>10</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, "Origin of the Ancient Egyptians," in General History of Africa: Ancient Civilizations of Africa, vol. 2, ed. G. Mokhtar (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 35-45.

ancient Egyptians when referring to their land. In the Pharaonic pictorial writing known as hieroglyphics, the most obvious term that literally referred to the 'blackness' was 'Khamit' and was depicted by a piece of wood burned at the end. The word has many variations and the Ham of the Bible is a derivative of it. The hieroglyphic characters used by the Egyptians were depictions of objects that were native to African soil.<sup>11</sup> Diop asserts that it has been "necessary to distort the facts to enable this root today to mean 'white' in Egyptological terms whereas in the Pharaonic mother tongue, which gave birth to it meant 'coal black'."<sup>12</sup> This term was a collective designation used by the ancient Africans to distinguish themselves as a whole from other nations. Scholars often omit the African association with this word or they "translate them using euphemisms such as the 'Egyptians' while remaining completely silent about their etymological sense."<sup>13</sup>

Although Cheikh Anta Diop analyzed the significance of blackness of skin as it relates to the Egyptians, there is not a singular prototype for African people. Keith W. Crawford

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<sup>11</sup>E.A. Wallis Budge, The Dwellers on the Nile: The Life, History, Religion and Literature of the Ancient Egyptians (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977), 172-173.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 41-42.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

explains the significance of this point as it relates to the scientific study of Egypt:

A critical point to understand when studying the racial makeup of Nile Valley populations is that the full diversity of Africoid variants was not often appreciated by the early anthropologists. What anthropologists called the "Negro" identified one form of Africoid variant common to the forest zone of West Africa. This variant became familiar to the European as the type primarily involved in the slave trade, and the ancestral group to Blacks in the American diaspora. Because of the extreme racist prejudice that grew against this group, and its role as the primary source of labor in the U.S. and European colonies, there was a conscientious effort to minimize the influence of this variant (or variants with close affinities) in Nile Valley populations.<sup>14</sup>

The word 'Egypt' is a word derived from the Greek term that came into use in the 7th century B.C.E.<sup>15</sup> The words Kushite, Nahasian or Nubian are used in reference to other ancient Africans of the Eastern region of Africa.<sup>16</sup> The connection of Egypt to Nubia is a very important factor in the discussion of the genesis and maintenance of ancient Egyptian culture.

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<sup>14</sup>Keith W. Crawford, "The Racial Identity of Ancient Egyptian Populations Based on the Analysis of the Physical Remains," in Egypt: Child of Africa, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 56.

<sup>15</sup>In Memphis there was the grand temple consecrated to the divinity Ptah. In the Khamitian language this temple was referred to as Het-Ka-Ptah. This translates into "house of the soul of Ptah". The Greeks came to refer to the entire land of Khamit as Hekaptah. In the Greek language "Hekaptah" became "Aiguptos". This word became Latinized into "Aegyptus", becoming in English Egypt.

<sup>16</sup>Diop, 27.

Diop has noted that the region to the south of Egypt is the most probable place of origin for elements of Egyptian culture. This point has been substantiated by the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. In 1962, this Institute conducted a Nubian expedition that involved an excavation in the Sudan at a place named Qustul. Qustul is an area in Nubia that thrived as a metropolis in ancient Africa. The data gathered in this expedition "unveiled a birthplace of pharaonic civilization several generations before the rise of the first Egyptian dynasty."<sup>17</sup> This find antedated the time that scholars previously suspected Nubian political advance, by over two millennia.<sup>18</sup>

The word Ethiopian is Greek in origin. 'Aithios' in Greek means 'burnt'. 'Ops' in Greek means 'face'. The word 'Aithios' combined with 'ops' became 'Aithiops', meaning 'burnt faced person', a name revealing the phenotype of the people so designated. The Greek word 'Aithiops' translates in Latin into 'Aethiops'. Ethiopia is also known as 'Kush' or 'Cush'. Cush is a derivation of the Egyptian word Kôsh, which is a name for Nubia, referring to the land area starting at

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<sup>17</sup>Bruce Williams, "The Lost Pharaohs of Nubia," in Nile Valley Civilizations ed. Ivan Van Sertima, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 29-42.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

the first cataract of the Nile river.<sup>19</sup> In consideration of the efforts of African scholars to be self defined, such is the reasoning for the above appellations.<sup>20</sup> In ancient times or pre-history, the Sudan, Khamit, Western Asia, India and Palestine were all considered Kushite territory.<sup>21</sup>

The terms 'Khamit' and 'Kush' are the original terms used by the Khamitians and are used throughout this study because they assist in the restoration and reclamation of Khamit as an African World civilization.

Through Egyptology and related fields, European imperialism and ethnic bias have distorted the assessment of African culture of ancient Egypt. The discussion which follows analyzes issues that arise in connection with this traditional, orthodox, Eurocentric scholarly writing on ancient Egypt and the legacy of African interest and research in Khamitian culture and history by African World professional and avocational scholars in response.

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<sup>19</sup>James Hastings, ed., Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 272.

<sup>20</sup>John G. Jackson, Introduction to African Civilizations (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1970), 65.

<sup>21</sup>E.A. Wallis Budge, A History of Ethiopia, vol. 1 (London: Methuen and Co., 1928), 1-2.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE RISE OF EGYPTOLOGY

#### Background of Egyptology

Egyptology is the scientific study of Khamitian history and culture based on the examination of the ancient Egyptian language, artifacts and archaeological remains. The presentation of data on this subject, as interpreted by many Western historians, has often led to an inaccurate portrayal as more impartial scholars examining the original culture of Khamit and Kush have pointed out. Thus C. F. C. Volney during the late 18th century reflected on the early cultural accomplishments of the peoples of the Nile Valley and the contemporary social status of their descendants whom he described in definitely phenotypic terms:

There a people, now forgotten, discovered while others were yet barbarians, the elements of the arts and sciences. A race of men now rejected from society for their sable skin and frizzled hair, founded on the study of the laws of nature, those civil and religious systems which still govern the universe.<sup>1</sup>

In a similar light, African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois,

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<sup>1</sup>C.F. Chasseboeuf de Volney, The Ruins of Empires, trans. Joel Barlow (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991), 16-17.

over a century later, wrote in The World and Africa:

...almost unanimously in the nineteenth century Egypt was not regarded as part of Africa. Its history and culture were separated from the other inhabitants of Africa... There can be but one adequate explanation of this vagary of nineteenth century science: it was due to the fact that the rise and support of capitalism called for rationalization based upon degrading and discrediting the Negroid peoples. It is especially significant that the science of Egyptology arose and flourished at the very time that the cotton kingdom reaches its greatest power on the foundation of American Negro slavery.<sup>2</sup>

It is very significant to note that the African Du Bois and the Frenchman Volney, are in agreement that the rise of Egyptology occurred during the period of forced servitude of Africans, which was at its height during the period of the cotton kingdom in the United States. During the pre-colonial and colonial period<sup>3</sup> of the 18th and 19th centuries, European investigators in their accounts presented Khamit as an European civilization. During the eighteenth century for example the French, under Napoleon, were also at the height of plotting and executing a territorial conquest of Northeast Africa. These endeavors involved not only an acquisition of

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<sup>2</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, The World and Africa (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 99.

<sup>3</sup>The colonial period, according to most colonial historians, begins with the Berlin conference that occurred in 1884-1885. This conference divided continental Africa and her resources among European nations. The forum in Berlin did not initiate the partition of the African continent but established rules to manage a process already in motion. See A. Adu Boahen, ed., General History of Africa: Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880-1935, vol. 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.), 25-30.

the regions resources but also an appropriation of information regarding Khamitian civilization. According to John H. Clarke, Europeans "not only colonized the world, they would colonize information about the world...."<sup>4</sup> Thus, a vital element in the establishment and maintenance of colonialism in Africa, together with the forced servitude of African people was a deculturalization process whereby African culture, both ancient and contemporary, was to be considered nonexistent. In keeping with their imperialistic political and social ambitions and aims, it became imperative for Europeans to deny Africans their true relationship to the civilizations of the ancient world.<sup>5</sup>

Frantz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth discusses the psychological damage that colonialism had on its colonized population. He notes that a vital process observable in European-enforced colonialism is the distortion of the history of the people they oppress:

Colonialism is not satisfied with merely holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it...to convince the natives that colonialism came to

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<sup>4</sup>John Henrik Clarke, "The Africans in the New World: Their Contribution to Science, Invention and Technology" in New Dimensions in African History, ed. John Henrik Clarke, (Trenton, NJ: African World Press Inc., 1991), 64.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Bernal, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, vol. 1 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 199-201.



lighten their darkness. The effect that was consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the native's head the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.<sup>6</sup>

The humanity of African people was denied and debased in the course of the efforts of the colonialists cultural onslaught. Beginning in the fifteenth century there were direct and indirect associations of dark skin color with evil and inferiority. By the year 1650, Eurosupremacy<sup>7</sup> was intensified and was actively exercised. This is seen in the Europeans' decimation of the Native American population and the enslavement of Africans. During this era, physical appearance became the basis of judgement. In the seventeenth century the notion was widespread among Europeans that Africans were but one step above apes and, therefore, were not worthy of consideration as humans in the recounting of history. Africa and Africans were words that became synonymous with barbarism. Views such as these were popularized by philosophers of that time such as John Locke, David Hume and George W.F. Hegel.<sup>8</sup> Hegel postulated:

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<sup>6</sup>Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 210-211.

<sup>7</sup>The term Eurosupremacy refers to the domination by Europeans of non-European people; the practice of Eurosupremacy is based on Eurosupremacist ideology that holds Europeans are superior to all other peoples.

<sup>8</sup>Bernal, 201.

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world, it has no moment or development to exhibit. Historical moment in it - that is in its Northern part - belongs to the Asiatic or European world. Carthage displays there an important transitory phase of civilization, but as the Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from the Eastern to the Western phase, but it does not belong to the African spirit. What we properly understand by Africa is the unhistorical and undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as the threshold of World History.<sup>9</sup>

Since Europeans treated Africans with cruelty, they created ideologies that justified their treatment of Africans. This ethnocentric bias would stir up problems for Egyptologists concerning the ethnicity of the Khamitians.

Nile Valley civilizations, particularly that of Khamit, had developed at a much earlier period than those of European nations. This fact was confirmed by the Greek historian Herodotus and other Greek and Roman contemporaries of the Khamitians during the late Dynastic period. In Plato's Timaeus, a Khamitian priest commented to a Greek citizen about the infancy of Greek culture:

O Solon, Solon, you Hellenes [Greeks] are never anything but children, and there is not an old man among you. Solon in return asked him what he meant. I mean to say, he replied, that in mind you are all young; there is no ancient tradition handed down among you by ancient tradition, nor any

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<sup>9</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1900), 99.

science which is hoary with age.<sup>10</sup>

Khamit's antiquity, which pre-dated Greece by thousands of years, became a prime reason for Europeans to despise it, labeling it static, stagnant and sterile. In essence, the culture of Egypt was utterly abused due to the Europeans' ethnocentric views that prevailed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup>

#### Some Early European Scholars on Ancient Egypt

Martin Bernal points out in Black Athena, that there are three intellectual factions that investigate the history and culture of Khamit. Firstly, there is a category of scholars that deny the African ethnicity of the Khamitians. Secondly, there is a school of thought that deny that the Africans of Khamit created a 'true civilization'. Thirdly, Bernal notes there are those who make a concerted effort to deny both Khamit's African ethnicity and the legitimacy of its civilization.<sup>12</sup> It is fair, however, to note that along with the categories indicated by Bernal, there are scholars, both African and non-African, who are not to be included in the above mentioned categories since they purposely endeavor to

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<sup>10</sup>Plato Timaeus 23.

<sup>11</sup>Bernal, 241.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

put forth accurate information and unbiased interpretation in their study of the culture of Khamit. One such scholar was C.F.C. Volney, a French intellectual who visited the temples and sacred monuments of Egypt.

Volney, in the midst of the Eurosupremacist intellectual climate of the late 1700s, did not hesitate to give an accurate account of the bas reliefs, the Sphinx, temples, and other Khamitian artifacts. Volney stated his central aim which was to discover "the essence by what secret causes do empires rise and fall: from what sources spring the prosperity and misfortunes of nations."<sup>13</sup> From his research, Volney concluded that Africans were responsible for the establishment of Nile Valley civilization. He documented the contributions and importance of Africans in the development of world civilizations. Although Volney's claims were considered debatable and revolutionary, that did not deter him from reporting his opinion. He cited the Greek writers Lucian (ca. 190-125 B.C.E.) and Diodorus (ca. 63 B.C.E.-14 C.E.), both of whom agreed that the ethnicity of the Khamitians was African. Volney specifically noted the African physiognomy of the Sphinx and of other depictions of Africans in Khamit. He also remarks that the first culturally advanced nation was Kush, the cradle of civilization.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Volney, 1-8.

<sup>14</sup>Volney, 13-17.

C.F.C. Volney was conscious of the political atmosphere in which he was writing his historical document. He remarked that the very people who are "rejected from society" for being Africans, are the very descendants of the authors of the Khamitian civilizations, hence of world civilization.<sup>15</sup>

Gerald Massey, an Englishman, was another prolific author who did not subscribe to the anti-African prejudice that was embedded in European scholarship and intellectual mode of discourse during the 1800s. Massey shed invaluable light on the nature of Khamitian society and provided detailed conclusions he gathered concerning the earliest emergence of civilization and human life. He declared unequivocally that the origin of civilization:

...has now to be sought for in Africa, the birthplace of the black race, the land of the oldest known human types, and of those which preceded and most nearly approached the human...Aethiopia and Egypt produced the earliest civilization in the world and it was indigenous. So far as the records of language and mythology can offer us guidance, there is nothing beyond Egypt and Ethiopia but Africa...<sup>16</sup>

Before the nineteenth century, European scholars were illiterate in the ancient Khamitian picture writing known as hieroglyphics. The French scholar, J.F. Champollion, also known as the "Father" of Egyptology is responsible for

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Gerald Massey, Book of Beginnings, vol. 2 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1881), 599.

establishing this vital breakthrough regarding the spoken language and written script of ancient Egypt by deciphering the Rosetta Stone. The granite relic played an integral role in the interpretation of the Egyptian culture because it furnished the necessary clues for scholars to decipher hieroglyphics. Champollion was a brilliant scholar who was well versed in the Coptic language which is now known to be one of the last surviving forms of the Khamitian tongue. By studying the hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek inscriptions of the stone, Champollion came to recognize that the unfamiliar glyphs were picture-signs, a number of which survived in modified form amongst the Greek alphabet.<sup>17</sup>

In 1822, in a letter to André Dacier, Champollion reintroduced to the world a system for deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics. This remarkable discovery brought about radical changes in the study of Egypt. The civilization of Egypt began to be partially understood by the Western World and to thrive again.<sup>18</sup> Utilizing the bas-reliefs of the tombs of Sesostri I (ca. 16th century B.C.E.), Champollion acknowledged the role that Africans played. This 18th Dynastic period document is a representation of the four major phenotypes of men of the ancient world. Champollion noted the

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<sup>17</sup>Peter Clayton, The Rediscovery of Egypt (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1982), 27-47.

<sup>18</sup>Aldred, 23.

African with a dark red complexion, well proportioned body, and a slightly aquiline nose and dressed in white as 'Rôt én né Rôme' [Khamitians]. The next figure had a dark complexion which Champollion claimed needed no classification for he was an African. The type of the third was that of a tan complexioned man with a pointed beard wearing a cloth of various colors. Lastly, the Frenchman pointed out a pale-skinned European with a straight nose, blue eyes and blond hair. This tall slender figure was clothed in ox-skin. Champollion described him in a letter to his brother, Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac, as a "tattooed savage".<sup>19</sup> He continued:

I certainly did not expect, on arriving at the Biban-el-Moluk, to find sculptures that could serve as vignettes for the history of the primitive Europeans, if ever one has the courage to attempt it. Nevertheless, there is something flattering and consoling in seeing them, since they make us appreciate the progress we [Europeans] have subsequently achieved.<sup>20</sup>

Although Champollion acknowledged the Africanity of the Khamitians, this fact was not readily accepted by his elder brother, Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac. Champollion-Figeac stated:

The opinion that the ancient population of Egypt

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<sup>19</sup>Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac, Egypt Ancienne quoted in Cheikh Anta Diop, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality, trans. Mercer Cook (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974), 46-48.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

belonged to the Negro African race is an error long accepted as the truth. Geographers in the East barely capable of fully appreciating the ideas provided by monuments on this important question have assisted in spreading this false notion. A well respected authority declared himself in favor of this view and popularized the error. Such was the effect of what the celebrated Volney published on the various races of men that he had observed in Egypt.<sup>21</sup>

Champollion-Figeac proceeded to assert that thick lips, black skin and woolly hair was insufficient evidence in claiming the Africanity of the Khamitians.<sup>22</sup> The views of J-J. Champollion-Figeac were held by many Eurocentric Egyptologists. They were not able to accept the notion of an African Egypt and their disbelief was accompanied by attempts to destroy the idea of an African Egypt by several means available to them. Justification for their actions was rooted in the premise that the national pride of Europeans needed to be safeguarded.

Cheikh Anta Diop states that the tactics European scholars used in dealing with the testimonies of the ancient writers about an African Khamit was to "either give them the silent treatment or to reject them dogmatically and indignant-ly".<sup>23</sup> He remarks sarcastically that many European scholars

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 50-51

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality, trans. Mercer Cook (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974), 45.



regret, with disgust, that the Khamitians made so serious a mistake in the depiction of themselves, that they created many contradictions for the modern scholar.<sup>24</sup>

A major factor responsible for the rise of Egyptology was the eighteenth century French invasion of Egypt. The French were not the first Europeans to invade Egypt; there were numerous raids that predated this Gallic intrusion. In fact, Egypt, which in the past had also invaded other nations, had experienced foreign invasions for over three thousand years. Early invasions were led by the Hyksos (ca. 1700 B.C.E.), the Ionians and Carians (ca. 630 B.C.E.), the Persians and the Greeks (ca. 525 B.C.E.), the Romans (ca. 50 B.C.E.) and the Arabs (ca. 700 C.E.) Thus, the land of Egypt was no stranger to foreign entry. However, the arrival of the French in the eighteenth century was very significant in that it led to the initial stage of an era which gave birth to a Western scientific study known as Egyptology.<sup>25</sup>

Although the French, under Napoleon, were the first Europeans to open the doors to a renaissance of interest in and consciousness of Egypt, other European nations soon

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See Peter Clayton, The Rediscovery of Egypt (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1982), 14.; Diop, 10; Charles Finch, "Africa and Palestine in Antiquity," in African Presence in Early Asia, eds. Ivan Van Sertima and Runoko Rashidi (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 190-192.

followed. As a result, Egyptian antiquities became choice items for many European imperialists. In their quest for economic gain they did not fail to include Egypt in their appropriation of non-Western resources. As early as the sixth century B.C.E., the Persians under the leadership of Cambyses had pillaged an abundance of Khamitian antiquities. Chancellor Williams estimated that Cambyses appropriated over a 100 million dollars worth of historical artifacts alone.<sup>26</sup> Augustus Caesar started moving Egyptian monuments in ca. 14 C.E., an activity that reached its peak in the nineteenth century. The national interest and personal acquisitiveness of the French, British and other Europeans resulted in many of the hieroglyphic inscribed monuments being removed completely out of Egypt.<sup>27</sup> Cyril Aldred reports concerning the European imperialists' quest for Egypt and her riches.

During this period of "unbridled pillage", almost as much was destroyed as was preserved. Tombs were opened with battering rams or gunpowder: precious written records were reduced to disjointed scraps: hardly anything was secured with its pedigree intact. Into this spoiling of the Ancient Egyptians, their descendants entered with as much zest as anyone, being only too eager to sell for Frankish gold, chance finds that they neither understood nor cherished. In the process, antiques were divided among several collectors, the head of a statue being acquired by one agent and the body by his rival. Papyri were cut up and the parts

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<sup>26</sup>Chancellor Williams, The Destruction of Black Civilizations (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987), 91.

<sup>27</sup>Clayton, 8.

sold separately, thereafter to live apart forever.<sup>28</sup>

In the year 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte set sail for Egypt. Assisting him were scientists and scholars from various fields of study. His research team, which numbered over two hundred, was taken along with orders to investigate all aspects of Egyptian history, both ancient and modern. In August 1798, Bonaparte established the Institute of Egypt and designated himself its Vice President. The main goal of the institution paralleled that of the research team, that is, to gather and publish natural, industrial and historical data concerning Egypt. The cadre also assisted in governmental duties. On many occasions, the French soldiers found themselves digging or participating in the activities of an archaeologist, as opposed to military duty. In fact, it was a French artillery officer who found the so called Rosetta Stone.<sup>29</sup> Many of the acquired items found a new home in France where Napoleon and his crew relocated them. A Khamitian obelisk, which now rests in Paris, was examined in the mid 1800s by former African American bondman William Wells Brown.

Brown comments:

...the French have erected on it [a French courtyard], or rather given a place to, the celebrated obelisk of Luxor, which is now the chief attraction on the grounds. The obelisk was brought from Egypt

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<sup>28</sup>Cyril Aldred, The Egyptians (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1961), 22.

<sup>29</sup>Clayton, 14-16.

at an enormous expense, for which purpose a ship was built, and several hundred men employed above three years in its removal. It is formed of the finest syenite and covered on each side with three lines of hieroglyphic inscriptions commemorative of Seostris...It would be tedious to follow the history of this old stone, which was taken from the quarry fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ in Thebes, its removal, the journey to the Nile and down the Nile thence to Cherbourg, and lastly its arrival in Paris on the 23rd of December, 1833, just one year before I escaped from slavery.<sup>30</sup>

Brown's remarks demonstrate that Africans in America were interested not only in the affairs of America and their ancestral homeland, but also in international affairs. During the era of forced servitude, many African World scholars developed a consciousness of events that were not merely of local interest.<sup>31</sup>

#### African World Responses to Eurosupremacist Views of Khamit During the 1800s

Rooted in the Western expansionism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the argument of a European Khamit went hand in hand with the attempt to extricate practically everything historical from Africans. The Christian religious doctrine of the supposed 'curse' on Ham, the Biblical

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<sup>30</sup>William Wells Brown, Sketches and Places of People Abroad (Cleveland: John P. Jewett & Co., 1855), 81-82.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

descendent of Canaan, was embedded in the psychological conditioning operation of the bondage process which was employed as a means of dehumanizing Africans and creating a false sense of superiority for Europeans. This doctrine essentially became the pseudoscientific rationalization for the physical exploitation of Africans. The Old Testament and Babylonian Talmud attributed myth is as follows:

Others say that Ham himself unmanned Noah who, awakening from his drunken sleep and understanding what had been done to him, cried: Now I cannot beget the fourth son whose children I would have ordered to serve you and your brothers! Therefore it must be Canaan, your first born whom they enslave. And since you have disabled me from doing ugly things in the darkness of night, Canaan's children shall be born ugly and black! Moreover, because you twisted your head around to see my nakedness, your grandchildren's hair shall be twisted into kinks, and their eyes red: again because your lips jested at my misfortune, theirs shall swell; and because you neglected my nakedness, they shall go naked, and their male members shall be shamefully elongated.' Men of this race are called Negroes; their forefather Canaan commanded them to love theft and fornication, to be banded together in hatred of their masters and never to tell the truth.<sup>32</sup>

Etymologically, as earlier mentioned, the words Ham and Kham(it) share a close relationship. Also in the Biblical references to Ham it is clear that Ham is a descendent of Kush, a name which refers to ancient Ethiopia [present day

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<sup>32</sup>Raphael Patai, Robert Graves and the Hebrew Myths: A Collaboration (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 344.

Republic of Sudan].<sup>33</sup> Most African-centered scholars of Khamit agree that Kush is the cultural progenitor of Khamit. This opinion is also expressed by many of the Greek contemporaries of Khamitian civilization. There is thus a scholarly and traditional consensus which connects Kham(it), Kush and Canaan, who were African according to Biblical and historical references. Thus, a contradiction arises. This conflict of ideas is examined by Cheikh Anta Diop in The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality:

...We can see that this Biblical curse on Ham's offspring had an origin quite different from that generally given it today without the slightest historical foundation. What we cannot understand however is how it has been possible to make a White race of Kemit: Hamite, black, ebony, etc. (even in Egyptian). Obviously according to the needs of the cause, Ham is cursed, blackened and made into the ancestor of the Negroes. This is what happens whenever one talks refers to contemporary social relations.

On the other hand, he is whitened whenever one seeks the origin of civilization, because there he is inhabiting the first civilized country in the world. So, the idea of Eastern and Western Hamites is conceived nothing more than a convenient invention to deprive Blacks of the moral advantage of Egyptian civilization and of other African civilizations....<sup>34</sup>

Thus, according to Diop, reference to Khamit in European academic and popular discourse is based upon the emotional and material interest of Western society. The Caribbean-born

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<sup>33</sup>Gerald Massey, A Book of the Beginnings, vol. 1 (Secaucus, NJ: University Books, Inc., 1974), 4.

<sup>34</sup>Diop, The African Origin, 9.

Wellesley University scholar Tony Martin, points out that the identification of Egypt as a European culture enabled Thomas Jefferson, G.W.F. Hegel, and other defenders of African captive labor to claim that Africans have never been civilized except under the tutelage of Europeans, and were therefore good for nothing but "hewing wood and drawing water" for Europeans. The Europeanization of Khamit is merely an adjunct to the alleged curse on Ham.<sup>35</sup>

In The World and Africa, W.E.B. Du Bois comments on the psychological damage and social degradation inflicted on African people in bondage:

The authority of the family was broken up: the authority and tradition of the clan disappeared; the power of the chief was transmuted into the rule of the white district commissioner. The old religion was held up to ridicule, the old culture and ethical standards were degraded or disappeared, and gradually all over Africa spread the inferiority complex, the fear of color, the worship of white skin, the imitation of white ways of doing and thinking, whether good, bad, or indifferent. By the end of the nineteenth century the degradation of Africa was as complete as organized human means could make it. Chieftains, representing a thousand years of striving human culture, were decked out in secondhand London top hats while Europe snickered.<sup>36</sup>

The image of Africa projected by Europeans, both in Europe and America, during the era of Africans' servitude and

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<sup>35</sup>Tony Martin, The Jewish Onslaught: Dispatches From the Wellesley Battlefront (Dover, DE: Majority Press, 1993), 55-56.

<sup>36</sup>Du Bois, 78.

the damage done to its societal institutions served to portray their mother continent as 'Darkest Africa' and made it possible for some traditional social systems there to undergo disturbance and destruction in the face of Europe's increasing imperialism. Therefore, according to the Western worldview, nothing of value to civilization would be found amongst African peoples. This biased depiction and social derogation created an atmosphere that made it difficult for Africans to develop a positive conception of their ancestral place of origin. Even in historical research being done on Africa, findings were presented in such a way as to exalt Europe and her people. The African abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet describes the nature of the dual European imposed transgression:

By an almost common consent, the modern world seems determined to pilfer Africa of glory. It were not enough that her children have been scattered over the globe, clothed in garments of shame, humiliated and oppressed, but her merciless foes weary themselves in plundering the tombs of our revered sires, and in obliterating their worthy deeds, which were inscribed by fame upon the pages of ancient history.<sup>37</sup>

As noted earlier, the age of 'Egyptomania' in the Western world was contemporaneous with the forced migration and plantation labor of Africans during the era of the Cotton Kingdom (1790-1860s). Here was a great irony: the buying and

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<sup>37</sup>Henry H. Garnet, quoted by W.E.B. Du Bois, review of An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, by Gunnar Myrdal in Phylon vol. 5, no. 2 (1st Quarter: 1944): 118.



selling of Africans who were being said to be less than human and, contemporaneously, the rediscovery of an ancient African nations [Khamit and Kush] that were the place of origin of much of Europe's civilization. The people of Kush were described in a surviving ancient European classical text as "blameless".<sup>38</sup> This paradox perpetuated itself to the extent that ships that Europeans employed in the buying, selling and trans-Atlantic transportation of Africans could even bear Egyptian names. In April 1842 European Captain C. Wyvill commissioned the ship Cleopatra on a journey to the Cape of Good Hope and began extracting the indigenous people from their homeland.<sup>39</sup>

Africans in their forced migration to America as bondspeople began to reclaim their lost heritage soon after their arrival on American soil. Many were seeking to recover their human dignity which forced servitude had almost completely destroyed. As one African World historian has commented:

...concurrent with the black man's search for an identity in America has been his search for an identity in the world, which means, in essence, his identity as a human being with a history, before and after slavery, that commands respect.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Homer Iliad 1.533.

<sup>39</sup>Pascoe G. Hill, Fifty Days On Board a Slave Vessel (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1993), 1-19.

<sup>40</sup>John Henrik Clarke, "African-American Historians and the Reclaiming of African History," in African Culture: The

Clarke adds that many Africans in America "discovered that Africa and her people had a history older than the history of their oppressors."<sup>41</sup> Africans in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century began even more to view the Nile Valley regions, particularly Egypt, as an integral part of Africa. Africans began to reclaim the sacred land whose temples reflect the genius and creativity that Africans contributed to the ancient civilizations. There were several noted African scholars and avocational archaeologists who called attention to the preeminence of the Khamitian civilization and its relevance in the assessment of the totality of an African World experience. There were many who in their writings confronted the biases during this time and claimed Khamit and her civilization as an African culture. The discovery of information affirming the Africanity of Khamit was a driving force behind research that had as its theme as "If the Africans of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia were great in the distant past, then what makes the African so inferior now?" St. Clair Drake elaborates upon this question and African World responses to it:

Black people under slavery turned to the Bible to "prove" that a black people, Ethiopians, were powerful and respected when white men in Europe were barbarians: Ethiopia began to symbolize all of

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Rhythms of Unity, eds. Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamuw Welsh Asante (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1990), 157.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 158.

Africa; and throughout the 19th century, the "redemption of Africa" became one important focus of meaningful activity for leaders among New World Negroes. "Ethiopianism" became an energizing myth in both the New World and in Africa itself for those prepolitical movements that arose while the powerless were gathering their strength for realistic and rewarding political activity... "Ethiopianism" left an enduring legacy to the people who fought for Black Power in the Twentieth Century...<sup>42</sup>

When the Africans in bondage realized that Egypt and Ethiopia were in the Bible, they began to challenge teachings of their oppressors. Because the Bible was respected by Europeans and considered a basis for their moral code, validity was given to its contents by Europeans. Africans began to reinterpret the Bible and develop their own doctrines through their interpretations. These teachings advocated African upliftment, morale building and the removal of an inferiority complex that honored mistruths put forth by Europeans.

It is ironic to note that many Africans in the Western hemisphere are descendants of West Africa<sup>43</sup> while the Nile Valley cultures are located on the Eastern part of Africa. The Ethiopia of the Bible is, due to Biblical indoctrination of the captive Africans, far more a reality to the religious community of Africans in America than West

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<sup>42</sup>St. Clair Drake, The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion (Chicago: Third World Press, 1991), 11.

<sup>43</sup>John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1974), 45.

Africa is. This Biblical reference enabled Africans to define themselves using an ancestral measure.<sup>44</sup> Not only did Ethiopia and Egypt provide a religious or Biblical place of identification for Africans; this association was a literal reality for many who considered "going back to Africa." Some Africans interpreted this to mean going to East Africa to 'reappropriate' that region. Martin R. Delaney urged his fellow Africans:

The land is ours, there it lies with inexhaustible resources; let us go and possess it. In Eastern Africa must rise up a nation, to whom the world must pay commercial tribute.<sup>45</sup>

The Biblical passage, "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God,"<sup>46</sup> cannot be overstated as a motivational factor for evoking African pride, humanity and self assertion of peoplehood. This visionary verse expressed a hope and prophecy that African sovereignty would soon be reestablished. Some Africans also rediscovered the fact that Africans mentioned in the Old

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<sup>44</sup>Bernard M. Magubane, The Ties That Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa (Trenton, NJ: African World Press Inc., 1989), 164.

<sup>45</sup>Martin R. Delany, The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered in A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States: From Colonial Times to the Civil War, vol. 1, ed. Herbert Aptheker, (New York: Citadel Press, 1971), 329.

<sup>46</sup>Psalm 68:31

Testament were not condemned for their dark skin color and in many parts of the Bible ethnicity was mentioned merely as a matter of narrative description. This is seen in Jeremiah's reference to the skin color of the Kushites where he asks, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Can the leopard change his spots?"<sup>47</sup> This was not done to be derogatory nor was there a sinister motive underlying this passage which would support the theory of the inferiority of Africans. These verses provided Biblical grounds which Africans used in their efforts to combat the myth of their natural servility, sanctioned and spread by some Europeans.<sup>48</sup>

Only seven years after Champollion deciphered the Rosetta Stone, in 1829, David Walker published a pamphlet titled David Walker's Appeal: To the Coloured Citizens of the World, But In Particular, and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America. Walker, in his document, addressed the need to acknowledge the Khamitians as Africans. He noted, despite the nineteenth century popular notion of a European Khamitian, that the Khamitians were of the same variety of complexions of the Africans of his era. Walker's utterances were motivated by his liberationist conviction and allegiance to African nationhood. His insistence on the Africanity of the Khamitians

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<sup>47</sup>Jeremiah 13:23

<sup>48</sup>St. Clair Drake, Black Folk Here and There, vol. 2 (Los Angeles: University of California, 1990), 5.

and Kushites was related to the liberation struggle in which he participated. Speaking out against the atrocities of his day, Walker considered his protest divinely inspired.<sup>49</sup>

...the God of the Etheopeans [*sic*], has been pleased to hear our moans in consequence of oppression and the day of our redemption from abject wretchedness draweth near, when we shall be enabled in the most extended sense of the word, to stretch our hands to the Lord our God...<sup>50</sup>

According to Walker, the divine force he acknowledged was an Ethiopian deity. Some historians posit that the impetus for the violence Nat Turner brought upon Southampton County, Virginia, was inspired by Walker's pamphlet.<sup>51</sup>

In the same year as the publication of Walker's pamphlet, 1829, the African American Robert A. Young published his Ethiopian Manifesto, Issued in Defense of the Blackman's Rights, in the Scale of Universal Freedom. Young, like Walker, prophesied a day of reckoning when Africans would rise up under the leadership of an African messiah and all Africans would be free. Young demanded that the "voice of imperative justice" must be heeded:

Ah! doth your expanding judgement, base slaveholder, not from here descry that the shackles which have been by you so undeservingly forged upon

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<sup>49</sup>David Walker, David Walker's Appeal: To the Coloured Citizens of the World, But In Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1993), 27-28.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>51</sup>Drake, Redemption, 45.

a wretched Ethiopian's frame are about to be forever from him unlinked...This we issue forth as the spirit of the black man or Ethiopian's right, established from the Ethiopian's Rock, the foundation of his civil and religious rights which hereafter will be exemplified in order of its course...As came John the Baptist, of old, to spread abroad the forth coming of his master, so alike are intended our words, to denote the black African or Ethiopian people, that God has prepared for them a leader, who awaits but his season to proclaim to them his birthright.<sup>52</sup>

Although Young's words were forceful and posed a threat to the existing system of forced servitude, his writing did not have the same alarming effect on nineteenth century American society as did David Walker's. Walker and Young, however, both mark the initial phase of a historical period that would be later called 'Ethiopianism' by scholars. Often this doctrine posited that God had special plans for Africans who suffered the cruelties of plantation life. This 'Ethiopian' doctrine dealt with more than mere allusions to Ethiopia in African American folklore, sermons, song and poetry. This ideology included a historical mythology that presented "an exalted view of the black race and its cosmic messianic movement."<sup>53</sup> This early stage of Ethiopianism

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<sup>52</sup>Robert A. Young, Ethiopian Manifesto, Issue in Defense of the Blackman's Rights, in the Scale of Universal Freedom in A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Citadel Press, 1971), 92.

<sup>53</sup>Wilson Jeremiah Moses, The Wings of Ethiopia: Studies in African-American Life and Letters (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 113.

occurred during a time of reinterpretation of history by use of the Bible and other literature.

The interest in, and study of, ancient Nile Valley culture was not only pursued by men, but women as well. An example of this activity can be seen in Maria Stewart, an African American woman born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1803. Although deprived of a formal education, Stewart hungered for knowledge. At the age of fifteen, she left home and attended Sabbath schools for five years. Stewart became dedicated to the effort of giving spiritual service to African Americans. She urged Africans to abandon ideas of inferiority, and used Biblical and historical examples to urge discipline and perseverance.<sup>54</sup> In 1833, Stewart gave a speech at the African Masonic Hall in Boston. In her lecture entitled, "On African Rights and Liberty", she noted the cultural position of Africa in the ancient world:

History informs us that we sprung from the most learned nations of the whole earth; from the seat, if not the parent of science. Yes poor despised Africa was once the resort of sages and legislators of other nations was esteemed for the school of learning, and the most illustrious men in Greece flocked thither for instruction.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Maria Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality on Which We Must Build," in Spiritual Narratives, ed. Henry Louis Gates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3-5.

<sup>55</sup>Idem, "On African Rights and Liberty," in The Daughters of Africa, ed. Margaret Busby (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 49.



Stewart mentions Africa and alludes to Khamit, but does not mention it by any of its names. The assertion that the Greek scholars went to Africa to learn provides a specific region in Africa, Khamit, according to many African-centered historians who confirmed Stewart's assertion during the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup>

On February 12, 1844, the African American R.W. Haskins delivered a lecture before the Young Men's Association in Buffalo, New York. Haskins, in his discourse, noted that most of his associates receive their information concerning ancient cultures "exclusively through the English press."<sup>57</sup> He stated that their opinions were colored with prejudice and their statements were not substantiated by verifiable facts. These gross assumptions, according to Haskins, were "based upon the partial testimony of a deeply interested party" and recipients of such information "have necessarily imbibed a vast amount of error and active prejudice to sustain that error, without a remote suspicion that any ground for such a state of things exists."<sup>58</sup> Haskins knew the unfamiliar material exposed to the masses was composed of interpretations by Europeans. He went

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<sup>56</sup>Stewart's views were substantiated by 20th century scholars, Martin Bernal, Cheikh Anta Diop, George G.M. James and Theophilé Obenga.

<sup>57</sup>R.W. Haskins, The Arts, Sciences, and Civilization: Anterior to Greece and Rome (Buffalo: A.W. Wilgus, 1844), 3.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

on carefully to document Khamit's role in antiquity as compared with that of Europe. Not only does he outline the greatness of Khamit in his discourse; he provides his perception of the status of Europeans in Khamitian society based upon monumental remains found in Northeast Africa.

Haskins comments:

...we may cite another ruin where were found twelve human figures, representing four races of men—three of each race ranged according to their respective claims to preference. The Egyptians were first, and were clothed in white, the product of their own looms; while the last in the procession, and the lowest in the scale, came the European race, with a delicate white skin, blue eyes, flaxen, or reddish beard, and clothed in bullocks hide, with the hair still upon them! Here is an antiquity not dreamed of by our classics, when such barbarians were Europe's only representatives at the learned and refined court of the Pharaohs.<sup>59</sup>

The Eurosupremacists' portrayal of European history was filled with self-glorification and provided their historical legacy with exaggerated grandeur and arrogance. This depiction resulted in a condescending attitude toward non-European people. The Eurocentric views created obstacles to Africans' understanding of their recent past and their ancient history, which according to the Europeans, was essentially non-existent. Africans, during the era of forced bondage and the post-emancipation period, found that with study and reflection they could indeed dismantle the myth of European superiority.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>60</sup>Edward W. Blyden, Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race (London: W.B. Wittingham and Co., 1917), 159-161.

Edward W. Blyden attacked this myth. He declares:

The whole of the rest of mankind doesn't hold the European, in view of his past history, in such unqualified admiration, as to admit without serious questions that he has the right to embody in terse phrases, and parade in titles of books, pamphlets and addresses, his contempt for other races...The African now coming forward through education and culture cannot have unlimited respect for all the qualities of the European races, a people with a compassion for taking away the countries of others and dignifying robbery as conquest, and whose systematic cruelty has been shown for ages in chaining, buying and selling other races. The intelligent Negro feels that the part of the oppressors, that the part of the man-sellers and man-stealers is far more contemptible than the part of the man stolen or sold.<sup>61</sup>

In 1852 Martin Delaney, co-founder and assistant editor of the North Star newspaper, published The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered. Published in Philadelphia, this document addressed the status of African Americans in the United States and offered alternative means to the existing crude living conditions. Delany noted how Africans in America were not adequately represented by the society in which they lived and subsequently had been grossly slighted, even by abolitionists. He also remarked the historically inaccurate accounts given by the Europeans regarding the Africans' history. Delany states:

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Their history - past, present and future has been

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

written by them, who, for reasons well known...are not their representatives, and, therefore, do not properly, nor fairly present their wants and claims among their fellows.<sup>62</sup>

Delany also observed a mental form of enslavement among his African contemporaries which he said was "as obnoxious as a physical servitude, and not to be tolerated; as the one may, eventually, lead to the other."<sup>63</sup> Delany also examined the culture and ethnicity of Khamit. In 1879 he asserted in The Origins of Races and Color:

To determine the race representatives of the Egyptian gods, will go far toward deciding the disputed questions as to who were the first inhabitants of Egypt and builders of the pyramids, catacombs and sphinxes...the fact is that the Negro race comprised the whole native population and ruling people of the upper and lower region of the Nile Ethiopia and Egypt-except those who came by foreign invasion...<sup>64</sup>

In addition, Delany showed how Europeans had hid many of the Africoid statues and figures of Egypt. He noted that most of the conquerors of Khamit damaged monuments and defaced inscriptions. Also, according to Delany, outsiders created replicas of Khamitian artifacts that reflected foreign image and interest. Delany states that in Egypt there is "the general absence of the evidence of African greatness where it

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<sup>62</sup>Delany, 327.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Idem, The Origins of Races and Color ( Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991), 60-68.

should be found, and that of those who succeeded to power and rule in their stead."<sup>65</sup> Through his research, Delany found parallels between the ancient Nile Valley cultures and the Nigerian based Yoruba people. In the following century, scholars analyzed this parallel and explored the possibilities for Khamitian and Kushite cultural ties to present day Nigerian ethnic groups.<sup>66</sup>

A matter of importance to Delany was Freemasonry; particularly the legacy of African men as Freemasons in the Americas, and the legitimacy of their Craft.<sup>67</sup> Emerging in the 18th century, the Masonic Order considered their religion as Egyptian and were self-defined as a priesthood. Their sacred symbols were Khamitian in origin and often were to be seen in Masonic lodges that resembled Khamitian temples. Many of their adopted symbols can be seen on America's Great Seal, and on the one dollar paper currency.<sup>68</sup> Freemasonry, as practiced by Africans in America, began from the aspirations of an eighteenth century Bostonian known as Prince Hall. Hall, a

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>66</sup>See Cheikh Anta Diop, Precolonial Black Africa, trans. Harold Salemson (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 216-219.; and Delany, Origins, 11, 82-89.

<sup>67</sup>Charles Wesley, Prince Hall Life and Legacy (Philadelphia: The Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, 1977), 54-61.

<sup>68</sup>Bernal, 26, 177.

prominent community leader addressed the Massachusetts Committee of Safety where he urged the enlistment of bondsmen and freedmen in the movement to liberate the colonies from British control. As a freedom fighter, Hall felt that the involvement of Africans in Freemasonry would be instrumental in their quest for freedom from physical servitude. In order for him to change the debased status of Africans, Hall looked to the Freemasons as a catalyst for transformation because of the reputation of the Masonic Brotherhood.<sup>69</sup> The eighteenth century Masonic order did not allow African members to join their order.

Due to the interest and perseverance of Hall and fourteen other Africans, they were admitted to an Irish regiment in the British forces under the aegis of Lodge 441. Later, this lodge left the area of Boston and the African initiates were left with limited autonomy within the local Masonic community. They were denied a full warrant by local headquarters as they waited to hear from England, and in the meantime, could not confer Masonic degrees to interested men in the Boston community. Finally the Grand Master of the England based Mother Lodge supported the African Masons and granted them a charter for African Lodge 459.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Loretta J. Williams, Black Freemasonry and Middle Class Realities (St. Louis, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980), 12-13.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 14-17.

In his organization, Hall recognized that the God he worshipped, that is the Master Craftsman was Ethiopian. "Hear what the great Architect of the universal world saith, Aethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto me."<sup>71</sup> African Masons, according to Hall, came from a legacy of great Africans of the ancient world and were worthy of imitation. Hall shared this legacy with St. Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Fulgentius.<sup>72</sup>

Delany, a Mason himself, maintained that Khamit and Kush were the places of origin for the ancient rite of initiatic wisdom later known as Freemasonry. The European Masonic Order shared the same views as to origins, but seemed to give credit to the ancient Greeks even while utilizing much of the ritual apparatus and esoteric teachings of Khamit as an integral part of their craft. Martin Bernal writes, "With some degree of self-deprecation, Masons have maintained the cult until today, as an anomaly in a world where 'true' history is seen to have begun with the Greeks."<sup>73</sup> The European Masons "have seen themselves as the successors to the Platonic Guardians and the latter's own model, the Egyptian priests."<sup>74</sup> Despite this

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<sup>71</sup>Wesley, 54-61.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Bernal, 26.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 177.

widely held view of the European Masonic order, Delany insisted that Africans were legitimate heirs to the ancient craft because of the Nile Valley African origins of the original Craft. Delany further asserted in Origin and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry into the United States and Legitimacy Among Colored Men:

We are either Masons or not Masons, legitimate or illegitimate; if the affirmative, then we must be so acknowledged and accepted- if the negative, we should be rejected. We never will relinquish a claim to an everlasting inheritance but by the force of stern necessity; and not that Masonic power in existence, with the exception of the Grand Lodge in England, to which we will yield in a decision on this point. Our rights are equal to those of other American Masons, if not better than some; and it comes not with the best grace for them to deny us.<sup>75</sup>

Owing much to this tradition, Prince Hall African Lodge 459 is the only lodge in the Western Hemisphere to ever receive a charter hand delivered directly to an initiate. This tradition has flourished and has even reached back into the land of its associated region of origin. There is presently a Prince Hall Lodge in Ethiopia.<sup>76</sup>

By 1866, the African abolitionist Edward Blyden had visited Egypt and had begun to develop vindicationist ideas

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<sup>75</sup>Martin R. Delany, Origins and Objects of Freemasonry: Its Introduction Into the United States and Legitimacy Among Colored Men quoted in Charles Wesley, Prince Hall Life and Legacy (Philadelphia: The Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, 1977), 54-61.

<sup>76</sup>Williams, Black Freemasonry, 126.



concerning the ancient African people of Khamit and their role in disseminating aspects of their culture to the world. Upon witnessing the pyramids, Blyden, overwhelmed by their magnificence and architectural splendor, commented in his observations:

This, thought I, was the work of my African progenitors ... Feelings came over me far different from those I have ever felt when looking at the mighty works of European genius. I felt that I had a peculiar heritage in the Great Pyramid built...by the enterprising sons of Ham, from which I descended. The blood seemed to flow faster from my veins. I seemed to hear the echo of those illustrious Africans. I seemed to feel the stirring impulse from those stirring characters that sent civilization to Greece...I felt lifted out of the commonplace grandeur of modern times; and could my voice reach every African in the world, I would have earnestly addressed him...'Retake Your Fame'.<sup>77</sup>

This visit was an inspiration for Blyden's writing and his research on ancient Africans. Three years later, he made his first literary success in an article entitled "The Negro in Ancient History". This article was a rebuttal to the assertions set forth by A.H. Foote. Foote claimed that if all Africans and their achievements were discarded, the "whole world would lose no great truth, no profitable arts, no exemplary form of life."<sup>78</sup> Using Biblical sources, ancient

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<sup>77</sup>Edward W. Blyden, From West Africa to Palestine (Freetown, Sierra Leone: Manchester & London Publishers, 1873), 112.

<sup>78</sup>Hollis R. Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan Negro Patriot 1832-1912 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 56.

witnesses and comparative philological references, Blyden argued convincingly for an African Khamit.

In 1883, George W. Williams published a book entitled History of the Negro Race in America. In this document, two chapters were dedicated to his interest in ancient civilizations of Northeast Africa. The first chapter entitled, "The Negro in the Light of Philology and Egyptology" recognized ancient Nile-dwelling Africans' culture through the eyes of science. The second chapter, entitled "Primitive Negro Civilization" noted that while Greece and Rome were in their infancy, Khamit and Kush were advanced cultures that were hoary with age. Williams also discussed the role that the ancient Africans played in giving birth to civilization.<sup>79</sup>

In 1884, the African abolitionist and orator, Frederick Douglass, delivered a speech entitled "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered". Douglass, who was self-educated, rose against great odds to establish respect for Africans through his interest in the historic accomplishments of Africans internationally, in the ancient and contemporary world. In his address, he spoke on the Khamitian people and their culture:

The fact that Egypt was one of the earliest abodes of learning and civilization, is a firmly established fact as are the everlasting hills, defying, with a calm front the boasted mechanical

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<sup>79</sup> George W. Williams, History of the Negro Race in America: From 1619 to 1880 (Salem: Ayer Co. Publishers, 1989), 22.

and architectural skill of the nineteenth century... Greece and Rome...and through them Europe and America have received their civilization from the ancient Egyptians. This fact is not denied by anybody. But Egypt is in Africa. Pity it had not been in Europe or in Asia, or better still in America! Another unhappy circumstance is that the Egyptians were not White people; but were undoubtedly, just about as dark in complexion as many in this country that are considered genuine Negroes; and that is not all, their hair was far from being of that graceful lankness which adorns the fair Anglo-Saxon head.<sup>80</sup>

Douglass had a strong desire to see Egypt. He believed that his interest in Khamitian culture would aid him in combatting American prejudice with a historical vengeance and would also allow him to aid Africans in their upliftment.<sup>81</sup> On his visit to Khamit, he noted:

One of the first exploits a tourist is tempted to perform here is to ascend to the top of the highest Pyramid. The task is by no means an easy one, nor is it entirely free from danger...I went with seventy years on my head, to the top of the highest Pyramid, but nothing in the world would tempt me to try the experiment again. I had two Arabs before me pulling, and two at my back pushing, but the main work I had to do myself...While nothing could tempt me to climb the rugged, jagged, steep and perilous sides of the great Pyramid again, yet I am very glad to have had the experience once, and once is enough for a lifetime.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Frederick Douglass, "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered," in African American Social and Political Thought: 1885-1920, ed. Howard Brotz (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1992), 233.

<sup>81</sup>Idem, The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1962), 579.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 585-586.

In the decade after Douglass' pyramid climb, in 1886, Menelik II, King of Ethiopia [formerly Abyssinia and earlier Axum] defeated the army of the Italians. This event created a fervor and passion among Africans in the Western Hemisphere, and for the African continent, particularly for Ethiopia. The defeat of Europeans in Ethiopia was considered by many Africans as prophetic and it carried religious significance. This event signified that "the redemption of Africa was near at hand."<sup>83</sup> Additionally, Ethiopia was a nation that had not completely succumbed to colonialism and had ancient proof of her Biblical antiquity in Ethiopia's historical Kebra Negast<sup>84</sup>. Many African people perceived Ethiopia as God's sacred protected territory. The historian Sylvia Jacobs has commented on the depth of the attention this political event had among Africans in America. Jacobs speculated that the Italian defeat by the Ethiopians was disseminated among :

...all blacks and passed among individuals within the black community in beauty shops and barber shops, at church congregations, at various meetings and gathering, and in family circles.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Horace Campbell, Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney (Trenton, NJ: African World Press Inc., 1987), 48.

<sup>84</sup>The Kebra Negast is an ancient book that traces the royal family of Ethiopia. This document is said to trace the lineage of Haile Selassie and Abyssinian royalty to the Biblical Sheba and Solomon.

<sup>85</sup>Sylvia M. Jacobs, The Africa Nexus: Black Perspectives on the European Partitioning of Africa 1880-1920 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 194.

William Scott described the Ethiopian consciousness of Africans in America in these words:

Stimulated by many references to ancient Ethiopia in the Scriptures and Sermons, Afro-Americans often perceived that African territory however defined, as the salvation of the race. Some thought that one day a black messiah would emerge from Africa to redeem the African race, religiously, socially, and politically. So ingrained did these and related views become that New World African often thought of themselves as Ethiopians, using that term to describe themselves and their organizations.<sup>86</sup>

Most of the African-centered devotees, like their European contemporaries, were Biblically oriented in their interest of Khamit. Africans in America searching for signs of greatness, made direct associations with Ethiopia and Egypt for their understanding of the ancient empires of Africa. Prevailing popular perceptions served as added motivation for Africans to identify with Khamit and Kush. Africans maintained that they were:

descendants of Ham, from whose seed they believed the Ethiopians and the Egyptians had also come; their ancestry could also be traced to the classical civilizations of the Nile Valley.<sup>87</sup>

The influence of Menelik's victory and the African pioneering

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<sup>86</sup>William Scott, quoted by William Scott in The Sons of Sheba's Race: African Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 19-21.

<sup>87</sup>Idem, The Sons of Sheba's Race: African Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941 (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 19-21.

interest in Khamit and Kush carried over into the early part of the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER 2

### AFRICAN VINDICATIONISTS OF KHAMIT

#### A Study of Khamit: An African Perspective

The state of the African-centered study of and interest in Khamit that entered the twentieth century was more organized than the previous century. As noted by W.E.B. Du Bois, "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the Color Line".<sup>1</sup> Just as with the previous century, many European scholars of Egypt maintained the notion that the prototype for the ancient Khamitians was "Caucasoid" and subsequently they were of European stock. Many devotees of an African-centered perspective of Khamit developed a more systematic and scientific approach to researching the Africanness of the Khamitians, as will be shown in this chapter. The fruit of their research is a more sophisticated product than that of the earlier scholars.

In Harlem, New York, in the first two decades of the twentieth century Africans in America were beginning to see themselves as a people 'reborn' with a sense of self and

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<sup>1</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folks (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 54.

peoplehood. Booker T. Washington wrote of the "New Negro".<sup>2</sup> However, the difference between the 'Negro' to whom Booker T. Washington referred and that of the Harlem Awakening was that the latter movement seriously focused on the cultural continuities of diasporic Africans in reference to their original homeland, Africa. This movement, referred to by many scholars as the Harlem Renaissance, provided a sense of confidence, ethnic pride, and interest in things African which in turn fueled the African-centered perspective concerning Khamit and the Nile Valley culture.<sup>3</sup>

During this period, affirmations inscribed on banners carried by Marcus Garvey's British and African-inspired processions provided a voice for the messages put forth by Garvey's movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) as well as by other Africans. Banners bore statements such as, 'The New Negro has no fear' and 'We trace our history and our claims'. Garvey believed the position of the 'New Negro' was that there can be no compromise until Africa is free.<sup>4</sup> Essentially, the "Old Negro" was talked and

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<sup>2</sup>Booker T. Washington, A New Negro for a New Century (Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing Inc., 1969).

<sup>3</sup>Richard B. Moore, "Africa Conscious Harlem," Freedomways (Summer 1963): 315-334.

<sup>4</sup>"Report of U.N.I.A. Parade," in The Marcus Garvey and U.N.I.A. Papers, vol. 2, ed. Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 493.



written about but the "New Negro" spoke for himself. Alain Locke writes:

Of all the voluminous literature on the Negro, so much is mere external view and commentary that we may warrantably say that nine-tenths of it is about the Negro rather than of him, so that it is the Negro problem rather than the Negro that is known and mooted in the general mind...Whoever wishes to see the Negro in the full perspective of his achievement and possibilities, must seek the enlightenment of that self-portraiture which the present development of Negro culture is offering.<sup>5</sup>

Although much had been written by African Americans about the Nile Valley heritage of the Africans, many Africans began to systematically and scientifically do scholarship on Khamit. African people were to gain respect for their creative and intellectual achievements down through the ages, even if in America "dying, but fighting back."<sup>6</sup>

In 1915, W.E.B. Du Bois initiated a systematic reexamination of Egyptology from an African-centered perspective. This effort is seen in Du Bois' book, The Negro. St. Clair Drake is a scholar who has written extensively on the issue of an African Egypt.<sup>7</sup> Drake comments on The Negro:

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<sup>5</sup>Alain Locke, ed., The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance, introduction by Arnold Rampersad (New York: Athenum, 1992), xxv.

<sup>6</sup> Claude McKay, "If We Must Die," in Black Writers of America: A Comprehensive Anthology, eds. Richard Barksdale and Kenneth Kinnamon (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1972), 493-494.

<sup>7</sup>St. Clair Drake, Black Folk Here and There, vol. 1 (Los Angeles: University of California, 1991), 309.

When W.E.B. Du Bois wrote The Negro in 1915, he pointed out that Egyptologists had a tendency to ignore the role of Negroes in the development of Egyptian civilization. At the same time he felt the need to use the factual information - as distinct from their interpretation of it - that they had gathered. He mentioned Breasted, Petrie, Budge, Newberry and Garstang as authors of the "standard books on Egypt" that he had consulted. He criticized them, however, on the grounds that "they mention the Negro but incidentally and often slightly."<sup>8</sup>

Du Bois' interest in Khamit preceded his authorship of The Negro. During a visit to Atlanta University in 1906 by noted anthropologist Franz Boas, he shared with Du Bois his thesis that Africans were the initiators of iron smelting. Boas also acknowledged the historical legacy of the ancient Sudanic civilizations. These topics had a powerful impact on Du Bois and played a significant role in influencing his writing on Nile Valley culture.<sup>9</sup>

Du Bois' The Negro addressed specific scholarly issues in the debate on the ethnicity of the Khamitians.

...[W]e turn to the valley of the Nile perhaps the most ancient known seats of civilization in the world, and certainly the oldest in Africa, with cultures reaching back six or eight thousand years. Like all civilizations it drew from without and undoubtedly rose from the valley of the Nile, because that valley was so easily made a center for the meeting of men of all types and from all parts of the world. At the same time Egyptian

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 315.

<sup>9</sup>Stuckey Sterling, Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 277.

civilization seems to have been African in its beginnings and in its main line of development, despite strong influences from all parts of Asia.<sup>10</sup>

Du Bois further argued that the Khamitians:

themselves, in later days, affirmed that they and their civilization came from the south and from the black tribes of Punt [presently Somalia] and certainly 'at the earliest period in which human remains have been recovered, Egypt and Lower Nubia appear to have formed culturally and racially one land'.<sup>11</sup>

The physical and cultural origins of the Kushite and Khamitian complex that Du Bois examined became the two pillars of the African-centered perspective with which African world scholars struggled since the origin of the age old debate.

Despite the fresh historical perspectives and mass interest provided by Du Bois and others, the general consensus among the mainstream European scholars was that Khamit's origin was nonetheless Euroasian. This belief was upheld into the latter portion of the 20th century.<sup>12</sup>

In 1918, historian George Wells Parker wrote Children of the Sun, published by the Hamitic League of the World. Using poetic metaphor closely resembling the translated versions of hieroglyphic texts, Parker wrote of the historical legacy of

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<sup>10</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, The Negro (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1915), 30.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>12</sup>Wayne B. Chandler, "Of Gods and Men: Egypt's Old Kingdom," in Egypt Revisited, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 118.

Africans whom he called Children of the Sun. He made references to university studies, scientific explorations, Egyptian commentators and Egyptologists one of whom:

...startled the scholars of Europe by saying that not only were the Egyptians of African origin but, that the human races of the ancient world, of Europe and Africa, are descended from a single family, whose original seat was on the shore of Equatorial Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Parker went on to say that researchers at the University of Pennsylvania confirmed the foregoing assertion and that civilization had its genesis in the Great Lakes region of East Africa.<sup>14</sup> The Harlem Renaissance writer, Langston Hughes poetically established ties to Khamit in his poem entitled The Negro Speaks of Rivers:

I've known rivers  
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older  
than the flow of human blood in human veins. My  
soul has grown deep like the rivers.  
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to  
sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised pyramids above  
it...<sup>15</sup>

An African-centered perspective regarding Khamit includes such forms of African World community expressions as literature and

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<sup>13</sup>George Wells Parker, The Children of the Sun (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1981), 4.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid..

<sup>15</sup>Langston Hughes, Selected Poems of Langston Hughes (New York: Vintage Classics, 1959), 4.

scholarly publications. Contemporaries of Du Bois, such as Carter Godwin Woodson, William Leo Hansberry and Marcus Mosiah Garvey were instrumental in the further development of information concerning the Khamitians and Kushites. Carter G. Woodson, the only child of African captive laborers, received a Ph.D. in history from Harvard University. He is especially remembered as the initiator of what is now known as African American History Month, the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, the Journal of Negro History and the Negro History Bulletin and of Associated Publishers.<sup>16</sup> Woodson had a keen interest in the ethnicity issue as well as the place of Khamit in its universal history. Woodson observed there was an apathy and a contempt that Africans in America held toward one another due to self hatred. Woodson was moved to remark that "Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, the Greek, the Teuton and to despise the African."<sup>17</sup> He further noted that it was a rarity for African students to learn about their past in school. Woodson stressed the need for Africans in America to become a historically well-read people.<sup>18</sup> He wrote:

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<sup>16</sup>Gene Smith, "What History?," Legacy, February/March 1995, 4-5.

<sup>17</sup>Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro (Nashville, TN: Winston-Derek Publishers Inc., 1990), 1.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-6.

We do not mean to suggest here, however, that any people should ignore the record of the progress of other races. We would not advocate any such unwise course. We say, hold on to the real facts of history as they are, but complete such knowledge by studying also the history of races and nations which have been purposely ignored. We should not underestimate the achievements of Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome; but we should give equally as much attention to the internal African kingdoms, the Songhai Empire, and Ethiopia which through Egypt decidedly influenced the civilization of the Mediterranean world.<sup>19</sup>

In 1922, a Howard University professor, William Leo Hansberry, started what would eventually be a twenty-seven year term teaching African history and providing fresh and insightful information regarding the African continent and Africans. Much of Hansberry's historical contribution affirms the role of Africa in the evolution of world civilization. He uses several accounts from ancient classical Greek writers to substantiate his assertions. Hansberry's works provide a clear indication of his scholarly orientation and objectives. As Joseph Harris comments:

...Hansberry fully understood the social; tragedy of the heritage in which Africans were not only denigrated but were taught to despise themselves and neglect the study of their history. In this context he recognized the historical links between the "African at home and abroad," an expression he employed on several occasions. He thus pursued a pan-African tradition....His purpose was neither to deny the tradition of denigration nor to glorify the black heritage, for as he noted, "The African like the rest of mankind, has nothing to gain in the long run by suppressing the truth and

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 101.

suggesting the false for chauvinistic reasons."<sup>20</sup>

Alain Locke was a Rhodes scholar, Harvard Ph.D., and a notable literary pioneer in the African American community who focused on the area of African art and its relationship to African and Western art forms. Locke was also the Chair of the Philosophy department at Howard University from 1917-1925 and also 1928-1954. In 1924, Locke took a sabbatical in order to work in Egypt in collaboration with the French Archaeological Society representing Howard University and the Negro Society for Historical Research. While in Egypt, on his only visit to Africa, Locke went on an expedition to parts of the Sudan and to Luxor where he witnessed the reopening of Tutankhamen's tomb. Locke documents his Egyptian experiences in "Impression of Luxor".<sup>21</sup>

The Honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the Jamaican born leader of the U.N.I.A., was an avocational scholar who advocated for what one would call today an African-centered perspective concerning the study of Africa in general and of Khamit and Kush in particular. He noted the extent to which

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<sup>20</sup>Joseph Harris, introduction to Africa and Africans: As Seen By Classical Writers, vol. 2, by William Leo Hansberry, (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1977), xx-xxi.

<sup>21</sup>See Leonard Harris, ed., The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 5-6, 296; Russell J. Linneman, ed., Alain Locke: Reflections On A Modern Renaissance Man (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1982), 107.

Europeans had gone in order to deny Africans the true story concerning their past. In The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, he states:

The white world has always tried to rob and discredit us of our history. They tell us that Tut-Ankh-Amen, a King of Egypt who reigned about the year 1350 B.C. (before Christ) was not a Negro, that the ancient civilization of Egypt and the Pharaoh [sic] was not of our race, but that does not make the truth unreal. Every student of impartial mind knows that the Negro once ruled the world, when white men were savages and barbarians living in caves; that thousands of Negro professors at that time taught in the universities of Alexandria, then the seat of learning.<sup>22</sup>

Garvey developed a mechanism to challenge the biases that many European centered scholars shared concerning African culture. He used his acquired knowledge to critique discoveries by Europeans and the Eurosupremacism found in their research:

Professor George A. Kersnor, head of the Harvard-Boston expedition to the Egyptian Sudan, returned to America early in 1923 and, after describing the genius of the Ethiopians and their high culture during the period of 750 B.C. to 350 A.D. in middle Africa, he declared the Ethiopians were not African Negroes. He described them as dark colored races...showing a mixture of black blood. Imagine a dark colored man in the middle of Africa being anything else but a Negro. Some white men whether they be professors or what not, certainly have a wide stretch of imagination.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Marcus M. Garvey, "Who and What is a Negro," in The Philosophies and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, comp. Amy Jacques Garvey (Dover: The Majority Press, 1986), 19.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.



Many Eurocentric scholars assert that Garvey and others have overly romanticized the past and excessively glorified the African as a historic figure. This assertion may bear some merit, but a healthy understanding of history creates the image, interest and human capabilities of the people it concerns. Thus, as for other peoples, myths of origin and even imaginative self-representations have their place in the African record. The anthropologist Marimba Ani, in Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior, notes the role that accounts of prestigious "sacred origins" play within society:

As people of African descent and others assert their definition of self in order to create a national consciousness, European academia belittles these efforts as juvenile and unnecessary. Can it be they do this (1) because their own myths of national origin have long ago been constructed and have served their purposes well and (2) because they are well aware of the motivational power of such myths?<sup>24</sup>

C. Eric Lincoln has charged that because of the social level to which Africans have been reduced in America, many scholars of history only promote the kings, queens and kingdoms of Africa, although the common person in Africa may have commanded just as much respect and dignity as royalty. The African nationalist, as depicted in Garvey, is often a revisionist who edits history or 'corrects' it to assert that

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<sup>24</sup>Marimba Ani, Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, Inc., 1994), 261.

transplanted Africans are descendants of royalty. The reconstruction of history may reach extremes since the establishment of Africans as a great people is central to the self perception of the African nationalist.<sup>25</sup> Ani, however, has noted the role sacred origins play within nationalistic ideologies. This concept is evidenced among many nationalists of the African World community.

During the time of the Garvey movement in the early twentieth century, the level of interest in Ethiopia increased. Garvey, like many Ethiopianists before him, noted the standard verse of the Psalms where "Kings would come out of Africa." It is reported that on the eve of Garvey's departure he declared, "Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King; he shall be the Redeemer."<sup>26</sup> In 1930 when the Abyssinian nobleman, Ras Tafari was crowned Haile Selassie<sup>27</sup>, Emperor of Ethiopia, many Africans interpreted his inauguration as the manifestation of Garveys' prophecy. Thus

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<sup>25</sup>C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America (Toronto: S.J. Reginald Sanders and Co., 1962), 44.

<sup>26</sup> Leonard E. Barrett, The Rastafarians (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 81.

<sup>27</sup>Ras is an Ethiopian title that means prince or nobleman. Tafari was the royal name Selassie bore prior to his inauguration as Emperor of Ethiopia. After being crowned, he adapted the name Haile Selassie. Many Africans, particularly Jamaicans, regarded Selassie as a "messiah" because of Garvey's "prophecy" concerning the appearance of future kings in the Eastern region of Africa.

Haile Selassie was seen as a Messiah for many Africans whose ancestors had been transplanted to the Western Hemisphere. Both Haile Selassie and Garvey are venerated in the beliefs and practices of the Rastafarians. This nationalist group seeks to study 'roots and culture' that is, their origins and traditions as an essential means of liberation from Eurosupremacy. In this quest history is essential.<sup>28</sup>

The degradation and humiliation experienced by Africans in the West caused many of them to look to history to remove the barbarism that Western society attached to them. In doing so, there was the tendency to glorify extravagantly the past and only focus on royalty or wealth. The Pan Africanist scholar, Walter Rodney, however stresses the importance of assessing daily life in traditional African societies of the Sudan and West Africa:

Even within those Kingdoms the historical accounts often concentrate narrowly on the behavior of elite groups and dynasties; we need to portray the elements of Africa's everyday life and to comprehend the culture of Africans irrespective of whether they were residents of the empire of Mali or an Ibo village. In reconstructing African civilizations, the concern is to indicate that African social life had meaning and value, and that the African past is one with which the black man can identify with pride. With the same criteria in mind, it is worth noting the following aspects of African social behavior: hospitality, the role and treatment of the aged, law and public order and social tolerance.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Barrett, 81.

<sup>29</sup>Walter Rodney, Groundings With My Brothers (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1969), 53.

Early in his nationalist movement, Garvey had been tutored by Duse Mohamed Ali who was born in Alexandria, Egypt of a Sudanese mother. Ali was an actor, historian and Pan Africanist. Ali's ideology grew from his historical background that had the Nile Valley cultures as a focus. Ali was appointed head of African Affairs of the U.N.I.A.<sup>30</sup> The critic Samuel Haynes has recorded that the Negro World "gained distinction also under the editorship of the great Egyptian author and historian Duse Mohamed."<sup>31</sup> The Negro World was one of two very important publishing outlets for people who shared similar views on African issues. The Harlem based Daily Negro Times, also served as a voice for promoting ethnic unity among Africans. These organs attracted a host of self-trained historians and commentators. Arden Brown, who was the first Field Secretary and Sales Manager of the Black Star Line was such an apprentice. Confronting a European-American professor writing in the Globe where reference was made to Africa and her 'Dark Frontiers', Arden Brown asserted that Europeans should keep out of Africa and further boasted of

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<sup>30</sup>Hill, Robert A. ed., "Biographical Supplement: Duse Mohamed Ali," The Marcus Garvey and U.N.I.A. Papers, vol. 1 Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, 519-521.

<sup>31</sup>Samuel A. Haynes, "Through Black Spectacles," Negro World, 15 April 1933, p. 4.

Africa's historic past and her contributions to the world.<sup>32</sup>

Brown comments:

Africa has given her Ethiopic alphabet to the now modern world as a guide which shows Africa was in the lead or is the leader of civilization. We, like the Irish claim: Withdraw your forces, which only rule us by tyrant subjugation, not only England but all Europe, and we will prove to the world that Africa, at home or abroad, is capable of self determination.<sup>33</sup>

The Garvey movement fostered pioneering efforts aimed at institutionalizing the study of African history. This activity was also pursued by various scholars.

One such scholar was J.A. Rogers. This eminent historian noted that census takers as late as the 1940s were in the habit of counting anyone with the slightest Africoid genetic strain as "Negro". The exception to this rule, according to Rogers, were Africans who had the ability to speak in a foreign language. Rogers sums up his views on the matter of ethnicity:

In short, as was said, when one enters the field of ethnology one steps into an atmosphere of crooked thinking, where the main idea is to prove inferior and superior races. If the kind of science that is in ethnology went into engineering, no automobile would ever run, no air-ship would ever leave the ground, in fact not even a clock would run.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Arden Brown, "Arden to the Negro World," Negro World, 14 June 1919.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Joel A. Rogers, Sex and Race: Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, FL: Helga M.

The issue of the phenotype of the Khamitians fueled much of Rogers' writing. He saw the significance of this study and the absurdities in the biased claims of European scholarship.

Rogers comments:

Match this statement of an eyewitness with that of certain Egyptologists who have come on the scene 2,400 years later and must rely on measuring skulls and leg-bones from the graves, after which they compare these measurements with certain standards fixed by members of their own school, who have determined what a Negro ought to look like. Much bitter argument has waged over what was the race of the ancient Egyptians. The exploiters of Negro labor and the Negrophobes are strongly opposed to the statement that the creators of the marvelous civilization of Egypt could have been Negroes. They were Caucasians they declare. However, the scholars who have been claiming all these black, woolly haired people as white, have now lost out to Hitler. The Egyptians, announces the great dictator, were Aryans, that is, Germans.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps it was the misleading remarks and oppressive notions of Europeans that led Rogers to use visual proof in documenting the historical African world in general and the Nile Valley cultures in particular. The visual impact that his pictures made on African Americans was tremendous. He made the distant lands of Egypt, Ethiopia and their icons immediate and real for many African Americans. J.A. Rogers has been labelled the father of 'photojournalism' because of

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Rogers, 1968), 37.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 44.

his strategic use of imagery in his works. This method continues to be used in African-centered scholarly circles to demonstrate the enormous impact that Eurosupremacism has in the age old debate.<sup>36</sup>

In 1926, Drusilla Dunjee Houston, an African American woman, wrote Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire. This publication documented the history of African people in the ancient past of Khamit and Kush in a comprehensive form. Through her use of anthropological, archaeological, ethnological and geological evidence, Houston proved the ethnicity and the culture of the Khamitians and Kushite Africans. Her efforts aided in curing the suffering of twentieth century Africans from historical amnesia. Frank Crosswaith highly recommended this book in a 1927 review. Crosswaith comments on the relevance of information on Khamit and Kush to Africans in America:

Such knowledge will give to the New Negro fresh pride and deeper inspiration to go forth and battle against injustice, economic, political and social with the great army of commonly oppressed peoples for a sane sort of civilization which will give to all groups their rightful place in the scheme of things as well as due credit for their share in the cause of human progress....The Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire should be read by every Negro.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Runoko Rashidi, "The Middle Kingdom of Khamit: A Photo Essay," in Egypt Revisited, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 183-210.

<sup>37</sup>Frank Crosswaith, "A Negro Civilization," review of Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire, by Drusilla Dunjee Houston, in The Messenger vol. 9, no. 8

The debate that raged during the early 1900s was between two opposing views concerning the origins of Khamitian culture. One view held that the authors of Khamitian civilization had come from outside of Africa, particularly Europe, and had created what was the grandeur of ancient Africa. St. Clair Drake comments that this viewpoint, "became one cornerstone of nineteenth century racist thought."<sup>38</sup> The other view held that the creators of this civilization were autochthonous and were from the southern region of Africa, portions of whose population and culture flowed with the Nile to the apex of the Northeastern region of Africa. This latter view, substantiated by contemporaries of the Khamitians, held that the ancient Ethiopians (Kushites) were the parents of the Egyptians and were similar in their customs, language, writing and arts. Like most devotees of the African-centered school of thought, Houston held this latter position.<sup>39</sup> She comments:

Many of the reliefs of the pyramids present the Ethiopian rulers as Lord of the Two Lands, with the throne titles Amen and Ra. They wear the same symbols upon their heads. We read the same names Ankh-Ka-Ra, Alu-Amen, Amen-Ark-Neb, showing that

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(August 1927).

<sup>38</sup>Drake, 315.

<sup>39</sup>Drusilla Dunjee Houston, Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1985), i-v, 1-7.



for ages Nubia and Egypt were ruled as one land, ages far earlier than the period marked in the average history as the Ethiopian dynasty.<sup>40</sup>

The politically charged climate of the early twentieth century harbored the Eurosupremacist position held by many European scholars. Sterling Stuckey notes that, "So strong was racist thought that whites that disagreed with the thesis that ancient Egypt was white kept silent."<sup>41</sup> Egyptologists were unearthing African's civilization and immediately denying their Africanity.<sup>42</sup> The late John G. Jackson elaborated on American Egyptologist James Henry Breasted:

He published a high school text book in 1916 called Ancient Times. It had two very fine chapters on Egypt and he plainly states in there that the ancient Egyptians were not white folks, but 'a brown skinned race'. And then he needed money to establish the Oriental Institute and to do research in Egypt. John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave him 1.5 million dollars, and then Breasted got out a new edition of his book and the Egyptians became 'members of the great white race'. In other words, in order to get Rockefellers money he had to switch over the Egyptians to 'the great white race'.<sup>43</sup>

In other accounts, the Ethiopians also became European

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>41</sup>Stuckey, 277.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>John G. Jackson, "Sitting at the feet of A Forerunner: An April 1987 Meeting and Interview with John G. Jackson," Interview by James E. Brunson and Runoko Rashidi, in African Presence in Early Asia, eds. Ivan Van Sertima and Runoko Rashidi (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 203.

like a leopard who miraculously changed his spots. It was posited that "careful students of antiquity now point out that the people of Ethiopia seemed to be of the Caucasian race."<sup>44</sup> Other accounts more liberal than those just mentioned, admit to the African ethnicity of the Egyptians who ruled after major achievements had taken place. The Egyptologist Arthur Weigall referred to the 25th dynasty as: "That astonishing epoch of Nigger domination".<sup>45</sup>

In 1929, more than ten years after W.E.B. Du Bois published his insightful book, The Negro, biased information continued to permeate mainstream information and scholarship resulting in continued inaccuracies in the study of Khamit. Du Bois maintained his position on Nile Valley culture and comments in Crisis:

Our history has been written by our enemies; all Egypt and Ethiopian history and the history of the Sudan has been written by white men who, save in a few cases, hold American and English prejudices against Negroes. The Harvard Expedition under Reisner has been recently excavating Ethiopia and raising heaven and earth to disparage Negro blood and misrepresent Negro history.<sup>46</sup>

Charles C. Seifert, in 1938, published The Negro's or

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<sup>44</sup>Arthur Weigall, Flights Into Antiquity (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1928), 222.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Opportunity of Atlanta," The Crisis, June 1929, 36.

Ethiopian's Contribution to Art. Although Seifert's primary focus was art, he displayed a keen sense of understanding of Khamitian iconography, spiritualism and history and their underlying unity with that of the rest of Africa. The Pan African connection, made by Seifert and others, provided a cultural basis for other nationalist movements of Africans primarily because it encompassed the diaspora that came mostly from West Africa and the Eastern cultures and their ancestors of the Nile.<sup>47</sup>

In 1942 an African American writer, Anna Melissa Graves, wrote a small book entitled Africa: The Wonder and the Glory. In this book, Graves discusses in detail the role of ancient Ethiopia and Egypt in the context of world history. Graves uses a quotation from Lady Lugard to further prove her thesis concerning the identity and reputation of the Kushites in antiquity:

The fame of the Ethiopians was widespread in ancient history. Herodotus describes them as 'the tallest, the most beautiful and long lived of the human race,' and before Herodotus, Homer, in even more flattering language, described them as the most just of men; the favorite of the gods.' The annals of all the great nations in Asia Minor are full of them. The Mosaic records allude to them frequently; but while they are described as the most powerful, the most just and the most beautiful of the human race, they are constantly spoken of as black, and there seems to be no other conclusion to be drawn, than that at that remote period in history the leading race of the Western world was a

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<sup>47</sup> Charles C. Seifert, The Negro's or Ethiopian's Contribution to Art (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1985), 22-23.

black race.<sup>48</sup>

In 1954, Professor George G.M. James, a native of Georgetown, British Guyana, South America, wrote a book entitled Stolen Legacy. This book systematically analyzed the debt that has historically been due to the Khamitians for their contributions to so-called Greek philosophy. The title of the book originated from James' contention that the Khamitians were the true authors of Greek philosophy.<sup>49</sup>

James confirmed, utilizing ancient references, that the credit for Greek learning, and ultimately European civilization, belonged to Africa. He cited ancient Greek historians, Pliny, Herodotus, Diodorus, Eratosthenes and Plutarch which provided support for his assertions. Chancellor Williams has commented that many contemporary Europeans "eagerly quote the ancient historians as first-line authorities, but attack them whenever and wherever their records upset the premises upon which modern racism is built."<sup>50</sup> African historian J.C. deGraft-Johnson authored a

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<sup>48</sup>Lady Flora Shaw Lugard, A Tropical Dependency: An Outline of the Ancient History of the Western Sudan quoted in Africa: The Wonder and the Glory, by Anna Melissa Graves (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1942), 2.

<sup>49</sup>George G.M. James, Stolen Legacy (San Francisco: Julian Richardson Associates, 1985), 9-22.

<sup>50</sup>See Ibid.; and Chancellor Williams, The Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a Race From 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D. (Chicago: Third World Press, 1990), 88.

book entitled African Glory. In this publication deGraft-Johnson wrote a chapter entitled "The Beginnings of North African History". This chapter provides a general but insightful overview of Khamit's Dynastic period. DeGraft-Johnson also elaborates upon the African ethnicity of the ancient dwellers of the Nile.<sup>51</sup> John Henrik Clarke comments on the importance of deGraft-Johnson's book:

African Glory is a general history of Africa written by an indigenous African scholar. Dr. J.C. deGraft Johnson writes about the whole of Africa and shows the interrelationships between the North and the South. This statement would not be necessary except for the misconceptions about North Africa, especially Egypt, being a part of Western Asia (now called the Middle East)...This book was published in 1954, the eve of the "Independence explosion" in Africa and the beginning of the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Colonialism and the attitudes that went with it were being challenged by African people and people throughout the world.<sup>52</sup>

Despite many misconceptions, several continental Africans were aware of the history of ancient Africa. DeGraft-Johnson and many other West African intellectuals established a

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<sup>51</sup>J.C. deGraft-Johnson, African Glory: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1986), 1-14.

<sup>52</sup>John Henrik Clarke, "African Glory, J.C. deGraft-Johnson and the Renaissance of Writing of African History By Writers of African Descent," review of African Glory, by J.C. deGraft-Johnson, in afterword to African Glory, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1986).

tradition concerning their interest in ancient Africa.<sup>53</sup> One of the foremost of these West African scholars is the Senegalese Cheikh Anta Diop.

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

### Khamit Scholar: Cheikh Anta Diop

Diop was a Senegalese Egyptologist who realized, in the early 1950s, that serious study of Africa, particularly Khamit, needed to be divided amongst scholars who could eventually master a subject.

The work I undertook in the early 1950s was actually the work of a generation of scholars, as I was soon to realize. What I mean is so many disciplines had to be mastered that no one person could possibly succeed on his own. For instance I started attacking the problem of ancient Egypt and its relationship to the rest of Africa via linguistics and history. But it was soon apparent that I had to master other various other fields, such as ethnology, anthropology and so on. Consequently, I was led to tackle biochemistry, physics, mathematics, philosophy, etc. I also had to learn the Egyptian language to communicate with them without any intermediaries such as translators. So you see what I mean...We must stop being dilettantes, dabbling here and there, and become well trained, pluridisciplinary specialists! Those who may not be able to master several disciplines at a time must at least master one of them - but completely. That is the least we can expect from serious scientific researchers today. Scientific cadres of the black world must cultivate competence.<sup>54</sup>

Diop's challenge was undertaken by a group of scholars who would eventually begin to specialize in areas concerning Khamit and the ancient Nile Valley culture. This reclamation

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<sup>54</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, "Interview With Cheikh Anta Diop," interview by Shawna Moore, in Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop, eds. Ivan Van Sertima and Larry Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 239.

of ancient Egypt creates a paradigm shifting the basis of all the arts and sciences and other areas of learning from the Western world to Africa.

In his researches, Diop used archaeological, scientific and anthropological evidence to prove the culture and ethnicity of the Khamitians. His life's work was revolutionary in that it confirmed, as many Africans had previously asserted, the Africanity of the ancient Nile Valley inhabitants. Diop would reinforce most, if not all, of these prior assertions of Africans with solid scientific research.

Eurosupremacism within Egyptology has not died. At the Symposium on the Peopling of Ancient Egypt and the Deciphering of Meroitic Script held in 1974, the majority of the participants were Europeans who expressed negative opinions towards the suggestion of the Africanity of Khamitians. The only two African World Egyptologists who presented at the conference were Cheikh Anta Diop and Théophile Obenga. At this symposium, Diop with virtually no support from other scholars who shared his views, argued the Africanity of the ancient civilizations of the Nile Valley. He offered as proof of his opinions historical pictures of the bas-reliefs and the first-hand testimonies of ancient writers. Diop also used as evidence a melanin dosage test which enabled him to analyze the black pigment in the skin of mummified ancient Africans. At this same conference, Théophile Obenga established with irrefutable evidence that the language used by the Khamitians



and the descendant of this language, Coptic, are related to other African languages. With an outline given by Diop (which included a comparison of the Senegalese tongue of Wolof and Khamitian) as well as the research of Obenga's linguistic composition, the quality of information presented by Diop and Obenga overwhelmed the European Egyptologists. Many of the European participants, prior to Diop's argument, had claimed that the Khamitians were European. After the concrete evidence was given, these very scholars had to compromise on many levels. There was a scholar that announced that even though these ancient people were of such a dark hue and had woolly hair they still were not African. Other European and Arab scholars declared the topic debatable and suggested alternatives to the opinion presented by Diop, for example, that the population of Khamit was racially mixed, or claimed that the topic was irrelevant.<sup>55</sup>

Diop's central thesis for most of his research was that all Africans can claim ancient Egypt as the basis or root of their traditional cultures, just as Westerners claim Greece and Rome as the origin of their civilization and the genesis of European thought and practice. Diop states:

The oneness of Egyptian and Black culture could not be stated more clearly. Because of this essential identity of genius, culture and race, today all Negroes can legitimately trace their culture to

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<sup>55</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, "Origin of the Ancient Egyptians," in History of Africa: Ancient Civilizations, vol. 2, ed. G. Mokhtar (Berkeley: University of California Press), 35-45.

ancient Egypt and build a modern culture on that foundation. A dynamic, modern contact with Egyptian antiquity would enable Blacks to discover increasingly each day the intimate relationship between all Blacks of the continent and the mother, Nile Valley. By this dynamic contact the Negroes will be convinced that these temples, these forests of columns, these pyramids, these colossi are indeed the work of his ancestors and he has a right and duty to claim this heritage.<sup>56</sup>

Since Diop's death in 1986, the Journal of African Civilization has become the primary disseminator of his viewpoint concerning the culture of the Khamitians. Although Diop, who has inspired many African-centered scholars, is deceased, his research remains the foremost authoritative body of knowledge in the tradition of African-centered Egyptology.<sup>57</sup>

#### Contemporary Revisionists of Khamitian History

From the beginning of the Civil Rights Era in the late 1950s through the present, there has been an abundance of literature published reflecting an African-centered perspective and interest in Khamit. Some of the most prominent of African world scholars and teachers active in the African reclamation of Khamit are: Yosef ben-Jochannan, Jacob Carruthers, John Henrik Clarke, Charles Finch, Willis Huggins, John G. Jackson, Maulana Karenga, Ivan van Sertima, and

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<sup>56</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality, trans. Mercer Cook (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974), 40.

<sup>57</sup>Drake, 313.

Chancellor Williams. These Khamitian revisionists have begun to reassess areas such as Khamit's relationship with a variety of geographic regions, art forms, mythologies and sciences.

A contributing factor to the renewed interest in Khamit was the African Studies Movement (also called the Black Studies Movement). This movement raised historical questions concerning African world history.

Like their predecessors, contemporary scholars began to assess the needs of important research, utilizing the works of early documenters of the African presence and cultural achievements such as Albert Churchward, Godfrey Higgins and Gerald Massey. These scholars are referenced by African-centered vindicationists.

By 1987 the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC) held a conference that convened in Aswan, Egypt, where there were eight-hundred diasporic Africans in attendance. This meeting, spearheaded by African World Scholars was a landmark for African scholarly achievement reflecting interest in and study of Khamitian culture. According to Jacob Carruthers this conference represented the:

...fruition of thousands of African people and especially our courageous deep thinkers of the early part of the nineteenth century who faced the most fearsome and miserable periods in our national history.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Jacob H. Carruthers, "The Presidential Address, Aswan, 1987," in Reconstructing Kemetic Culture: Papers, Perspectives, Projects, ed. Maulana Karenga (Los Angeles:

Under unfavorable conditions Africans had developed and maintained a historical connection with Khamit. Thus, the conference represented a cultural continuum initially established by many nineteenth century trailblazers.<sup>59</sup>

In a lecture entitled "Egypt", Ivan Sertima remarked that "...no historical question has aroused more fire, no historical question has raised more violent disputes than the quest of who were the early Egyptians."<sup>60</sup> In spite of the continuing efforts of African-centered historians, distortions of Khamitian history continue to appear.

In an article which appeared in Newsweek dated September 23, 1991, the cover article was entitled, "Afrocentrism: Was Cleopatra Black? Facts or Fantasies: A Debate Rages Over What to Teach Our Kids About Their Roots."<sup>61</sup> In the background of the cover illustration there was a picture of Cleopatra VII. The depiction of this ancient Queen had a red, black and green earring in the shape of the African continent superimposed on her ear. There is a bust of Queen Nefertiti of Egypt also shown within the article. A fundamental question the article

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University of Sankore, 1990), 161-163.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ivan Van Sertima, Egypt Revisited (Highland Park, NJ: Legacies Inc., 1988), cassette tape.

<sup>61</sup>Jerry Adler and others, "African Dreams," Newsweek 23 (September 1991): 42-45.

raises asked is: Who were these two queens and what historical contribution did they make to Khamit?<sup>62</sup> Asa Hilliard answered this question in an article entitled, "Bringing Maat, Destroying Isfet". Hilliard comments:

...both of the two most publicized queens of KMT are of foreign descent, Nefertiti (daughter of Persian King Dushratta) and Cleopatra VII (a descendent of the Ptolemaic line from Macedonia, possibly with some African mixture). They are almost always selected as the illustrations for articles that discuss KMT, especially articles about the race of the Kemites...Why use foreigners to represent natives? Why turn natives into White people? It is a not so subtle attempt to prove the Egyptians were actually White. Even scholarly magazines follow this pattern.<sup>63</sup>

Obi T'Shaka has found a thread that is consistent throughout much of the anti-African and anti-Khamitian literature from Eurocentric academic circles whose assertions have as their central theme the effort to refute the Africanity of Khamit. T'Shaka cited as what he calls a typical example an article in U.S. News and World Report entitled "A Fringe History of the World". The article dates November 12, 1990. Obi T'Shaka elaborates:

The technique used by this writer to refute this position is typical of the overwhelming majority of these articles; assertions, in the form of sound bites, rather than facts, are used to support the writer's position. Instead of presenting

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Asa Hilliard, "Bringing Maat, Destroying Isfet: The African and African Diasporan Presence in the Study of Ancient Kemet," in Egypt Child of Africa, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 128.

historical facts to refute the historically and factually supported position that ancient Kemit (Egypt) was a Black civilization, the writer asserts that "I phoned seven Egyptologists at random around the country, and all seven said it is completely untrue, then asked that their names not be used. It's too hot to say this in public" said one. The entire basis for what this author calls a "fringe history" is the alleged assertion of white historians who don't have the courage to reveal their names and put forward concrete evidence to support their position. We are supposed to believe them because they are white.<sup>64</sup>

T'Shaka maintains that the central thesis of European authorities is a historically insupportable argument. In order to gain control over our families and communities T'Shaka asserts that Africans need to put African history in its proper perspective.<sup>65</sup>

During the era of forced servitude Europeans also imposed stereotypes of inferiority on Africans. This process has perpetuated itself from one generation to the next. Although formal physical bondage has ended, mental servitude remains. This enslavement has resulted in a sense of worthlessness among Africans. Asa Hilliard notes that mental captivity, in many regards, is worse than physical bondage.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Obi T'Shaka, Return to the African Mother Principle of Male and Female Equality, vol. 1 (Oakland: Pan African Publishers and Distributors, 1995), 303.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 303.

<sup>66</sup>Asa G. Hilliard, introduction to Stolen Legacy by George G. M. James (San Francisco: Julian Richardson Associates, 1985).

Charles Finch, a physician and also a lecturer on African spirituality and health, notes that many Africans perceive Egypt as a part of the "Middle East" instead of Africa. This inaccurate perception of Khamit has developed from Hollywood movie themes and other media images of Egypt such as those presented by Charlton Heston or Elizabeth Taylor who have played the roles of ancient Egyptians in films. Finch asserts that it is vitally important for African Americans to establish and maintain a proper relationship to their ancient and near past. He points out that the health of Africans does not only refer to the physical health but also to individuals' perception of their place in world history. Therefore, a healthy understanding of one's past aids in the creation and maintenance of a proper functioning human mechanism.<sup>67</sup>

The historian Arthur A. Schomburg, in his essay, "The Negro Digs Up His Past", gives voice to this important relationship. He remarks:

The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. Though it is unorthodox to think of America as the one country where it is unnecessary to have a past, what is a luxury for the nation as a whole becomes a prime social necessity for the Negro. For him, a group tradition must supply compensation for persecution, and pride of race the antidote for prejudice. History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present

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<sup>67</sup>Charles Finch, interview by author, Tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, 8 November 1993.

generation must repair and offset.<sup>68</sup>

Although this statement was written over sixty years ago, it remains applicable to the social situation of Africans in America. The necessity of re-analyzing African history continues to exist, just as the efforts of biased European scholarship persist in distorting the past of Africa. For over two centuries, Europeans have failed to evolve their basic thesis concerning ancient Egypt. Hilliard remarks sharply that this failure on the part of the counter school has not been due to a lack of findings.<sup>69</sup> Drusilla D. Houston notes the vicious cycle of mainstream scholarship:

Modern researchers seem to collect superficial research... Archaeologists dig up the proofs, ethnologists announce their origin, but history refuses to change its antiquated and exploded theories.<sup>70</sup>

Houston also noted that European scholarship only uses information that reinforces its preconceived theory of a non-African Khamit and Ethiopia. It has been the efforts of the African-centered school of thought that has gone to great

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<sup>68</sup>Arthur A. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," in The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992), 231.

<sup>69</sup>Asa Hilliard, interview by author, Tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, 15 November 1993.

<sup>70</sup>Houston, 15-16.



lengths to refute this perceived falsification of history.<sup>71</sup>

Asa Hilliard points out that the efforts of these African scholars are gaining a new appreciation amongst African Americans. As additional literature is published exposing the Eurosupremacist scholarship, there will be an increased interest in revisionism. Hilliard states, "This is happening now, even in the African American church. As in Du Bois' concept of 'Twoness' this is a reflection of the African Americans' warring soul. If one perceives the West as the beginning of civilization, their self perception and Western oriented solution to self identity will be limited to the West which actively and systematically deprives them of this".<sup>72</sup> For instance, students at Oxford University requesting classes in African history were told by Hugh Trevor Roper, a former Chair of Modern History at Oxford University that:

Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...and darkness is not a subject of history.<sup>73</sup>

This demonstrates the ability of Western scholars to control curricular content. Hilliard also notes the power of

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>72</sup>Hilliard, interview.

<sup>73</sup>Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Broadcast Lecture," quoted by Lansiné Kaba in "Ideology and African History," The Black Scholar, December-January 1973-1974, 44.

government to legitimize selected histories and cultures.<sup>74</sup> According to the Atlanta based African American community activist and writer, Askia Touré, the oppressive conditions in which the African community has found itself has motivated African Americans to 'return' to Khamitian culture. The contemporary use of popular artifacts that reflect Khamitian culture such as pendants, T-shirts and buttons are signs of the reawakening of Africans in the Western Hemisphere to their claims on and inspiration from Khamit. In this awakening, African Americans are taking a leading role. Touré asserts that Africans in America have responded to their conditions in America by using Khamit "like a weapon".<sup>75</sup> This leadership role of African residents in America is due to their material conditions which include access to duplication, and library resources. To many students of Khamit, the responsibility Africans in America continue to take is no surprise. This development was predicted by Cheikh Anta Diop: "We can build a body of disciplines in the humanities only by legitimizing and systematizing the return to Egypt."<sup>76</sup> Diop declared

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<sup>74</sup>Asa Hilliard, "The Meaning of KMT (Ancient Egypt) History for Contemporary African American Experience," Phylon vol. XLIX, nos. 1 & 2. (Spring/Summer 1992), 14.

<sup>75</sup>Askia Touré, interview by the author, Tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, 9 November 1993.

<sup>76</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology, eds. Harold Salemson and Marjolijn de Jager, trans. Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 309.

further that it would be the Africans in the Western hemisphere that would further the study of Khamit and the Nile Valley civilizations and connect it to the rest of Africa. This task has been taken up by many professional and lay scholars.<sup>77</sup>

Charles Finch presents this message to African Americans:

It [Khamit] was an African civilization in every respect and we should not be modest or timid about claiming it. There is no need to be modest or timid about what belongs to you.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Hilliard, interview.

<sup>78</sup>Charles Finch, interview by author, Tape recording, Atlanta, Georgia, 8 November 1993.

## CHAPTER 3

### KHAMITIAN SPIRITUALITY

#### Obstacles in the Approach to Khamitian Religion

In the last three decades many Africans have not only claimed Khamitians were African, but have also begun embodying the culture and spiritual traditions of Khamit. Rejecting Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, a number of African Americans are adopting the Ausarian model<sup>1</sup> for spiritual growth and development. In response to the social ills and strife that plague the African community, Africans have long sought for a model that is adequate to meet Africans' special needs, spiritually and intellectually. This is the reason why many Africans in America are turning to Khamit for metaphysical instruction.

According to Ra Un Nefer Amen, Khamit led the world in civilization by her arts and sciences and lasted longer than

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<sup>1</sup>Ausar is the African name for the central deity in the Khamitian pantheon. The Greeks called Ausar Osiris. Within Amen's evolving Khamitian-based spiritual group, Ausar Auset, Ausar is the prime model that the aspirant seeks to emulate in order to develop lofty morals, psychic ability and social collectivity. Ausar's complement is Auset whom the Greeks named Isis. See E.A. Wallis Budge, Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973), 270-275.

any other world nation. This achievement by the ancient Africans is proof of a very evolved social order. The major aim of students of Khamitian spirituality is to reestablish that high social order which will in turn aid Africans in their quest for "social harmony and individual self-realization."<sup>2</sup> The aspiration of many Africans to adopt Khamitian tradition is a grand one but the mere thought of it has historically posed serious problems to them. An immense veil has continually shrouded the applicability of the Khamitian heritage in the lives of African World peoples, and particularly of Africans. The veil has been created by the biased presentation of Khamit by the Western establishment's academic ethnocentrism and its practice of historical fabrication.<sup>3</sup>

One of the foremost aspects of the obstruction regarding Africans and the religion of Khamit is that many Africans have been led to consider the Khamitians as worshippers of mere statues. In fact, this is a symptom of Africans' psychological bondage due to their lack of knowledge in the Americas concerning Khamitian culture. In antebellum

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<sup>2</sup>Ra Un Nefer Amen, "The Spiritual Teachings of Ancient Egypt (Kamit): Their Relevance to Africans Americans Today," Metu Neter, August 1994, 17.

<sup>3</sup>Roosevelt H. Roberts, "Medu Netcher: A Matrix for the Study of Ancient Kemet," in Reconstructing Kemetic Culture: Papers, Perspectives, Projects, ed. Maulana Karenga (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press), 131.

plantation life it was a common understanding among many African captive laborers that the Pharaoh of the Bible was an evil taskmaster, and therefore was closely associated in their minds with the European oppressors during the era of bondage.

Yosef ben-Jochannan comments:

The parallel of the story, where Moses and his brother Aaron confronted Pharaoh Rameses II and said: 'Thus sayeth [sic] the lord, the god of Israel: Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the Wilderness', is being echoed in the cries of African Americans everywhere in the Americas today. Up until this day Blacks in America still sing "Let my people go;" but many substitute "...from Jim Crow's land" for "Pharaoh's land"...<sup>4</sup>

Africans in America later began to analyze critically this negative perception of Khamit, for some Africans boasted of the glory and splendor of Khamit while others abhorred Khamit and the Pharaohs. For clarity, scholars searched the historical and Christian scriptural records to comprehend the dynamics of the Hebrews' experience in Khamit.

A great deal of evidence lies in the Hebrew based scripture of the Bible where examples abound that show that in ancient times there was a strong anti-Khamitian sentiment held by the Hebrews; thus the Hebrew records in turn became Biblical propaganda. According to Diop, in Khamit, the Hebrew people found themselves in a hostile environment, thus they

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<sup>4</sup>Yosef ben-Jochannan, "Moses: African Influence on Judaism," in African Origin of the Major World Religions, ed. Amon Saba Saakana (London: Cornice House, 1991), 15.

created a god-concept that kept them in their "creator's" best interest and this conviction "was an irreplaceable moral support".<sup>5</sup> Thus, Yahweh, the deity of the Hebrew people, was one that cared for his "chosen people". We shall show how this Hebrew viewpoint came to present to African people obstacles to their embracing Khamitian insights through its slanted interpretation and through the historical stance of the Western establishment toward the African World experience.

Some scholars have maintained that many of the characters mentioned in the scriptures of the ancient peoples are actually symbolic representations of nations; the accounts are drawn from folklore and are largely allegorical in nature. Finch calls attention to one of these scholars, an English scholar:

Gerald Massey, in 36 years of mind-bending labor was able to demonstrate that 'revealed' Judaeo-Christian religion, as preserved in the Old and New Testaments, represents but the creation of history out of purely mythical events. Figures and episodes in scripture, meant to be allegorical expressions of an age-old mystery-drama, were gradually transmogrified into real persons and events. The unbelievable and fantastic in the Bible are precisely those elements that were originally mythical, then made historical. Revealed religion is but unrevealed mythology.<sup>6</sup>

According to Finch the Biblical characters Cain and Abel

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<sup>5</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality, trans. Mercer Cook (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Finch, Echoes of the Old Darkland: Themes From the African Eden (Decatur: Khenti Inc., 1991), 129-130.

represent a prototype of warring twins.<sup>7</sup> Cain was a farmer, an individual settled in one place, and this was the way of living of the Khamitians. Abel was a shepherd, and this was the occupation of the Hebrew people. It is seen in Genesis that Cain's initial offering, which was his best, was rejected by the God Yahweh without any explanation while that of his brother Abel was graciously accepted. In the Bible, heaven is a "shepherds' heaven", a place that overflows with milk and honey. The Eurasian Hebrews were shepherders.<sup>8</sup> Later in the scriptural account, Yahweh sent many plagues to Northeast Africa that affected the Khamitians but did not affect the Hebrews even though they shared the same land during the period in question. According to the Biblical text the plagues were intended to coerce the Pharaoh to free the Hebrews being held in bondage in Khamit. In the final plague all first born Khamitian males were killed, an event which supposedly made the Pharaoh give in to Hebraic pleas for their freedom. The Hebrew legend relates that when the Khamitian army pursued the Hebrews, the former drowned at sea while the Hebrews crossed the same waters that parted for them providing dry land for them to walk upon. The pyramids were also, according to Hebrew myth, created by the labor of

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>8</sup>Ra Un Nefer Amen, An Afrocentric Guide to A Spiritual Union (Bronx: Khamit Corporation, 1990), 31-32.



Hebrews. There is also in the Hebrew scriptures the age old attempt, by the Hebrew people, to take credit for Khamitian creations of monotheism and Kabalistic wisdom as well as the pyramids and temples .<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to note the dichotomy, found in the Biblical information and Hebrew inspired lore, between cursed Khamit and the glorified Hebrews. At this point further clarity regarding the identity of the Hebrews and the Hyksos is imperative. Diop comments on the Hyksos:

...[T]hose most detested by the Egyptians were the Asian shepherds of all kinds, from the Semites to the Indo-Europeans. For these, no epithets were insulting enough. According to Manetho, they called them: "ignoble Asians." From *Hyk*=king, in the sacred language, and *Sos*=shephard, in the popular tongue, came the name to designate the invaders. The Egyptians also called them "accursed" and "pestiferous," "pillagers," "thieves..."<sup>10</sup>

The literature that the Hyksos wrote favored them even in very extreme cases. The irony is that as Diop points out, according to historical and Biblical accounts, the Hebrews entered Khamit around 1700 B.C.E. without industry or culture and years later left with their tradition in full bloom, cursing the creators of their religious tradition, the

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<sup>9</sup>Charles B. Copher, "Egypt and Ethiopia in the Old Testament," in Nile Valley Civilizations, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 166-167.

<sup>10</sup>Diop, 62.

Khamitians.<sup>11</sup> According to Charles Finch, "Egypt came to epitomize evil and godlessness."<sup>12</sup> The fact that the Khamitians were African provides reason for the skewed interpretations by the priests who issued the Jewish holy books such as the Talmud, Torah and the Midrashim.<sup>13</sup>

Wayne Chandler also notes the historical relationship between the Khamitian and the Hebrew people despite widely held misconceptions:

The Hyksos invaded lower Egypt following the Thirteenth Dynasty. They pillaged and destroyed thousands of the statues, maimed and killed an undisclosed number of Egypt's inhabitants and mercilessly raped the women of the kingdom. This domination of Lower Egypt persisted for two centuries! How ironic, the Jewish people identify themselves as the former slaves of Egypt, when in fact their ancestors, the Hyksos, ruled and enslaved Egyptians for 200 years...<sup>14</sup>

Chandler demonstrates that the Hyksos were actually the enslavers of the Khamitians. On this point Diop explains that when the practice of genocide is completed, an emotion of guilt comes over the conquerors which is difficult to suppress. This feeling gives birth to expiatory literature in

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 5-7.

<sup>12</sup>Finch, 179.

<sup>13</sup>Copher, 167.

<sup>14</sup>Wayne B. Chandler, "Of Gods and Men: Egypt's Old Kingdom," in Egypt Revisited, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 147.

the form of legends and tales concerning the land invaded. In propaganda-ridden literature "the conquered people are charged with all the sins".<sup>15</sup> Regardless of whether widely popular belief maintained that the Khamitians were enslavers of the Hebrews or less popular beliefs maintained that the Hebrews were the oppressors of the Khamitians, the result of these historical inaccuracies has been a negative perception of the Khamitians which has obstructed the acceptance by present day Africans of their identification with Khamitian ideas.<sup>16</sup>

Another major impediment for contemporary Africans who wish to embrace Khamitian spiritual philosophy is that Khamitian spiritual teachings have been negatively categorized as being polytheistic and idolatrous. Africans influenced by this Judeo-Christian monotheistic interpretation are less likely to have interest or find value in Khamitian spirituality. However, many African-centered scholars point out that Khamit was the earliest place where monotheism existed and this occurred long before Akhenaton and prior to the arrival of the Hebrew people for whom the credit for monotheism has gone in contemporary times. Further research by

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<sup>15</sup>Cheikh Anta Diop, Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology, ed. Harold J. Salemson and Marjolijn de Jageer, trans. Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 133.

<sup>16</sup>Maulana Karenga, "Toward A Sociology of Maatian Ethics: Literature and Context," in Egypt Revisited, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 353.

African scholars found that the Khamitian spiritual systems were more than the simplistic interpretations which Judeo-Christian influenced scholars labelled animism and nature worship.<sup>17</sup>

Wade Nobles maintains that the Khamitians acknowledged one ultimate, transcendent divinity that expressed its multiplicity through various manifestations. Often the deities of the Khamitian cosmology depicted on the temple walls and surviving material have animal or insect appendages that are attached to the anthropomorphic figures. In Khamit the hieroglyphic representations of the zootype was venerated as a practice of consecration of the vital function perceived as incarnate in the animal. By means of symbols and the symbolic, one can comprehend that what European scholarship characterized as "savage animal worship" was not truly worship as suggested, but a method to acknowledge the natural laws embodied by various animals. Thus the symbol, pregnant with meaning, was a cultural metaphor that was used a physical representation to describe immaterial realities and functions.<sup>18</sup>

The long standing Christian doctrine was simplistic and direct when used as a model to critique Khamitian culture.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Wade W. Nobles, African Psychology: Toward Its Reclamation, Reascension and Revitalization (Oakland: Black Family Institute, 1986), 34.

All gods besides Jehovah and his only begotten heir were demonic and their followers "constituted the legion of the damned".<sup>19</sup>

Africans who began to study critically and systematically issues such as these began to look at Khamit in a different light from before. Their effort to restore Khamit's spiritual and moral legacy was a direct outgrowth of the struggle to create a "Black Theology" and to produce its African specific sacred text. The initial endeavor did not directly focus on Khamit. The early period of this activity involved a process of Africanizing Judaism, Islam and Christianity.<sup>20</sup> This is evident in African nationalists requesting a "Black Bible." This yearning for an African-based Holy Book has always been a part of the Africans' struggle for determination and affirmation of their spirituality. The 1970s struggle was spearheaded by Yosef ben-Jochannan and local clergymen in Harlem and brought to light an authentic liturgical literature of African origin. Ben-Jochannan looked to Africa for inspiration for this document and declared that the first sacred writing on record

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<sup>19</sup> Manly P. Hall, Freemasonry of the Ancient Egyptians (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society Inc., 1965), 18.

<sup>20</sup> Maulana Karenga, "Restoration of the Husia: Reviving A Sacred Legacy," in Kemet and the African Worldview: Research, Rescue and Restoration, eds. Maulana Karenga and Jacob Carruthers (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1986), 83-85.

devised for the purpose of paying honor and reverence to a divine Creator was that of the African people of the Nile Valley and the Great Lakes regions of Central, East and Northeast Africa. Ben-Jochannan further pointed out that this book was called the Book of Coming Forth By Day (4,000 B.C.E.), and it was the original "Bible."<sup>21</sup> Karenga argues that Africans' desire for a "Black Bible" in effect "reflects a conceptual rootedness" in the Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>22</sup>

A number of scholars began to assert that much, if not all, of the world's great religions were more or less perverted versions of the doctrinal content of the ancient Khamitian Wisdom schools. These scholars demonstrated that many of the teachings and liturgical and ceremonial practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam were in existence thousands of years before the birth of any of the major world religions. Moreover, evidence indicated that it was from Khamit that these traditions received the essence of their belief systems.<sup>23</sup> Charles Finch has presented a concise yet

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<sup>21</sup>Yosef Ben-Jochannan, A Chronology of the Bible: Challenge to the Standard Version (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 5-9.

<sup>22</sup>Karenga 83-85.

<sup>23</sup>See Gerald Massey, The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ (Brooklyn, NY: A & B Book Publishers, 1992), 1-40; Willis Huggins and John G. Jackson, Pagan Origins of the Christ Myth (Austin, TX: American Atheist Press, 1988), 1-31; Yosef ben-Jochannan, Black Man of the Nile and His Family (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1989), 340-342.

convincing summary of information on the Nile Valley sources of the Old Testament<sup>24</sup> and the derivative relationship between Christianity and Khamitian beliefs and practices:

Reviewing the attributes of the principal characters of the Osirian drama, certain parallels to the Christian Gospels immediately stand out. The composite figure of Osiris-Horus is the archetype of the Gospel Christ. Like Jesus, Osiris-Horus was born of a Virgin, contended against the Adversary in the desert, died, and was resurrected to become the Judge of the Dead. Isis, like Mary, was the Queen of Heaven and Virgin Mother of the Divine Child. Set was the original Satan: one of his zootypes was the goat...Set's color was red...the links between the Osirian mythic structure and Gospel Christianity are much closer than these superficial, though striking, similarities.<sup>25</sup>

#### Khamitian Initiatic Method

The removal of mental and spiritual chains of inferiority was an aim for Khamit advocates. Writing in the introduction to George G.M. James' Stolen Legacy, Asa Hilliard comments:

Mental bondage is invisible violence. Formal slavery has ended in the United States. Mental slavery continues to this present day. This slavery affects the mind of all people and, in one way, is worse than physical slavery alone. That is the person who is in mental bondage will be "self contained". Not only will that person fail to challenge beliefs and patterns of thought which control him, he will defend and protect those beliefs and patterns of thought with virtually with his last dying effort.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Finch, 179-185.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>26</sup>Asa G. Hilliard, introduction to Stolen Legacy by George G.M. James (San Francisco: Julian Richardson Associates,

The poorly developed self-concept of Africans in America has been associated with social ills such as personality conflicts, emotional instability and paranoid behavior. Societally, these psychological disabilities often lead to homicides, marital problems, crimes and other indications of a crumbling community.<sup>27</sup> The controlling "beliefs and patterns" mentioned by Hilliard parallel the Christianity that is associated by many scholars such as Yosef ben-Jochannan and Maulana Karenga to be a major part of the "slave mentality". For some Africans in America, the blending of the Khamitian wisdom tradition and Christianity was a possible compromise; for others the reclaiming of the Khamitian heritage was an opportunity to reject Christianity as their religion and to adopt and reestablish Khamitian spiritual traditions. The eminent scholar-activist Hubert Harrison said he would rather go to hell an African, than to worship a European image of Jesus.<sup>28</sup>

Africans who took the stronger position in favor of African spiritual beliefs divorced themselves from the Judeo-Christian tradition and attempted to resurrect the purest

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<sup>27</sup>Richard D. King, African Origin of Biological Psychiatry (Germantown, PA: Seymour-Smith Inc., 1990), 23.

<sup>28</sup>John G. Jackson, Hubert Henry Harrison: The Black Socrates (Austin: American Atheist Press, 1987), 2.



possible form of Khamitian spirituality suitable for Africans in the Americas. An alternative was needed. Khamitian wisdom was seen by advocates of the African-centered perspective to be central in bringing about the alleviation of the Africans' social ills.<sup>29</sup>

African initiations and processes of transformation allow for the gradual and healthy development of individuals. The initiate progresses from the base stage of gross externalization to the state of inner contemplation; it allows for the person to gain consciousness of his humanity. Often the group will "ritualize" the importance of goals attained creating an impetus for the next level for those on the initiatic path to enlightenment.<sup>30</sup> Richard D. King suggests that Khamitian initiatory wisdom plays a key role in transforming African American "mental" slaves into masters by the "process of returning to formulative history and records of past achievements, not to copy exact duplicates but to reclaim that which is of value and which can still be used, with modification in today's world."<sup>31</sup>

According to Asa Hilliard, Khamitian esoteric systems in

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<sup>29</sup>King, 23.

<sup>30</sup>Dominique Zahan, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 54.

<sup>31</sup>King, 105.

ancient times provided a pathway for each initiate to master lofty teachings and eventually become a priest, scribe, master teacher, or simply an upright citizen. The major focus of education in Khamit was for humans to become one with the Creator and to embody godlike principles. The means to manifest these qualities was through the development of virtue and the principles of righteousness. In Khamit, a person was considered essentially spiritual and the spirit was inside a finite physical body. The spirit of a being was the part that was considered eternal. The ability of an individual to become godlike was contingent on the ability to rise above impediments that manifested as character flaws. Virtue could only be achieved through intense study, meditation, initiation and other ritualistic practices.<sup>32</sup> The hardships and tests make the initiate a part of nature or an 'immortal'. The initiate plays an active role in the society as opposed to a passive role.<sup>33</sup>

George G.M. James, in his book Stolen Legacy, outlines a general set of rules that the Egyptian initiate had to follow in order to fulfill the responsibilities of a neophyte into the system. This is an important work in which the author provides in part a moral guide, for Africans in the West, that

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<sup>32</sup>Asa Hilliard, The Maroon Within Us: Select Essays on African American Community Socialization (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995), 92.

<sup>33</sup>Zahan, 62.

was is not based in the Judeo-Christian religion. The ten desirable attributes proposed to the mind of a neophyte was a historical revelation and they also were inculcated to become in time a commitment to a code of conduct.<sup>34</sup> James lists the lofty goals of the Khamitian initiate:

(1) Control of thought and (2) Control of action...(3) Steadfastness of purpose, which was equivalent to Fortitude. (4) Identity with spiritual life or higher ideals, which was equivalent to Temperance an attribute attained when the individual gained conquest over the passional nature. (5) Evidence of having a mission in life and (6) Evidence of a call to spiritual Orders or the Priesthood in the Mysteries...(7) Freedom from resentment, when under the experience of persecution and wrong. This was known as courage. (8) Confidence in the power of the master (as Teacher), and (9) Confidence in one's own ability to learn...(10) Readiness or preparedness for initiation.<sup>35</sup>

According to James, Khamitian esoteric institutions had three major grades of students. The first were the Mortals, who were probationary initiates who had not yet received divine insight. The second level James called the Intelligences which were those who experienced inner vision and spiritual consciousness. The last group were called the

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<sup>34</sup>Asa G. Hilliard, "Pedagogy in Ancient Khamit," in Kemet and the African Worldview: Research, Rescue and Restoration, eds. Maulana Karenga and Jacob A. Carruthers (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1986), 138-140.

<sup>35</sup>George G.M. James, Stolen Legacy (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954; repr., San Francisco: Julian Richardson Associates, 1985), 30 (page references are to reprint edition).

Creators or Sons of Light which were those who were united with the Light or "God consciousness".<sup>36</sup> James challenged the foundation of the Eurocentric worldview by his reclamation of the Khamitian heritage for African people, while also providing them with spiritual practices. He charged Africans to "abandon their false worship of Greek intellect, and to reject the caricature of their culture by Missionary enterprise."<sup>37</sup> James further stated that this mental readjustment was necessary for a "Revolutionary Social Reformation" that acknowledged Africans as significant people in the social affairs and interaction in the world.<sup>38</sup>

James also provided a means of metaphysical liberation through his focus on the Memphite theology. This spiritual framework was established to allow humans to know their summun bonum or greatest good. This feat was accomplished by removing bodily fetters from the soul that impeded the growth of the individual or group. James ingeniously associated the inferiority complex with the fetters that obstructed one's manifestation of higher ideals.<sup>39</sup>

To establish the foundation for Khamitian spiritual

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 184.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 1, 57.

practices one must diligently "soul search". "Soul searching" also allows for the fulfillment of the Khamitian admonition, 'Know thyself'. This phrase takes on a unique meaning in African culture because of the biased projections of mainstream history. In accordance with the quest for self knowledge, the neophyte must engage in unlearning the undesirable and in reeducating one's self in relation to their personality or higher self, referred to as the Ka in Khamitian thought.<sup>40</sup> The outcome of this exercise is the stronger presence of the personality and the development of psychospiritual senses.<sup>41</sup> This initiatic method, undertaken by Africans, has culminated in a unique practice of spirituality in the African World community. In this tradition distinct African traits developed through reference to Khamit are expected to maintain a strong presence in the diaspora and allow for further inquiry into the consciousness of spirituality in the African world community. It is vitally important to document this spiritual presence in the African world community.

#### Khamitian Spirituality: An Africanism in the Diaspora

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<sup>40</sup>E.A. Wallis Budge, A Hieroglyphic Vocabulary to the Book of the Dead (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1991), 406.

<sup>41</sup>Robert Masters, The Goddess Sekhmet: Psycho-Spiritual Exercises of the Fifth Way (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1991), 215-216.

Africanisms refer to African traits, cultural continuities, themes and common threads that link and identify a people, even over time as African. Joseph Holloway defines Africanisms as "those elements of culture found in the New World that are traceable to an African origin...." <sup>42</sup> As here defined, African continuities observable even beyond the geographic boundaries of the "New World" are also considered Africanisms. A notable example is the system of beliefs and practices of the Ausar Auset Society.

A leading figure in the inculcation in diasporic Africans of Khamitian spiritual principles is Ra Un Nefer Amen, formerly known as R.A. Straughn. Amen is the archpriest of the Ausar Auset Society and author of several books concerning Khamitian spiritual teachings. The Ausar Auset Society is a Pan African religious organization founded in 1973 by Ra Un Nefer Amen I, the Shekhem Ur Shekhem (King of Kings) of the spiritual group. The Ausar Auset Society is headquartered in New York and has branches in twenty-four major cities of the United States and in London. The major objective of the organization is to offer the African diasporic community a means of spiritual development that addresses the social and psychological ills that plague the African community at large. Although many advocates of the African-centered perspective have considered God to be an African deity, most of the

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<sup>42</sup>Joseph Holloway, Africanisms in American Culture (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), ix.

earlier ones have maintained a Judeo-Christian basis for their religious thought and practice including the Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey. Amen divorces the tradition of Khamitian wisdom from the Judeo-Christian outlook.

This religion is known to the Ausar Auset Society as the Ausarian religion because it is based upon the ancient teachings of Ausar (Osiris). The Ausarian tradition aims at awakening the higher faculties of the spirit. It is a tradition that ritualistically embodies truth.<sup>43</sup>

Ausar and Auset (Isis) are spiritual complements to one another, thus these are the patron and matron deities of the society. To fulfill goals of divine spiritual growth, the society offers classes on three levels. The levels are general education, initiation, and priesthood training. For over twenty years, Amen has written several volumes and formulated exercises based on the spiritual practices of the Khamitians. He posits that it is futile to rewrite the intellectual history alone; in the effort to resurrect Khamit, one must go further. In Metu Neter, Amen comments on his mission:

Although the material in this book has the full support of historical documentation, I am writing foremost as a priest of over twenty years of practice. I am here presenting a practical syncretism of the best that the Kamitic (Ancient

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<sup>43</sup>Ra Un Nefer Amen, Metu Neter Anuk Ausar: The Kamitic Initiation System, vol. 2 (Brooklyn, NY: Khamit Corp., 1994), 22.

Egyptian), the Dravidian (Black India), and the Canaanite (true authors of Kabala) religions have to offer. They were among the six nations that laid the foundation of civilization. But it would be folly on our part to merely document this fact, and to compile a list of who, what, when, why and what. Would it not be a sign of intelligence, to be more interested in the methods employed by them for the creation of civilization, that we may learn and apply them to its recreation? If the religious and philosophical systems are so great, why aren't we practicing them?<sup>44</sup>

Amen has begun to reestablish the spiritual tradition of Khamit on Western shores. Using the Kabalistic Tree of Life, known in Khamit as the Paut Neteru, Amen imparts insightful cosmological knowledge of the Khamitian deities. This is done through instruction in meditation, breathing techniques, ritual and historical analysis.

As with many of the very early advocates, Amen made connections between inner Africa and Khamit. He explains:

Once it is realized that the "wisdom of antiquity" was that of the same Blacks who are today still dwelling in India, Sub-saharan Africa, etc., then the alternative will be made clear. Through one to one correspondences, for example, if I note similarities between the West African Yoruba deity Obatala (Obi Tala), and the Dravidian Goddess Tara, whose mantra is Aum, and the Kamitian deity Ausar, whose name conceals the mantra Aum, I can test my hypothesis with the existing rituals of Obatala, the Goddess Tara, and the surviving material about Ausar.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Idem, Metu Neter: The Great Oracle of Tehuti and the Egyptian System of Spiritual Cultivation, vol.1 (Bronx, NY: Khamit Corp., 1990), 2-3.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 38.



This Khamitian tradition, as taught by Amen, could be termed as syncretistic because of the way he has used other traditions to show parallels with it and brought further understanding to Khamitian culture. His demonstration of correspondences between the Khamitian and various indigenous traditional African religions broadens the perspective of Africanity as providing a view of Khamit through those cultures.

The last eras of Khamitian history saw the rule of Khamit by foreign invaders and the disruption of its societal integrity, particularly the spiritual component. The decline of Khamit's glory began during the epoch of the conquest of the nation by Alexander the Great (ca. 356-323 B.C.E.): this event was followed by the rule of the Ptolomies and finally the domination of Khamit by the Romans.

According to deGraft-Johnson, the rule of the Ptolemies was riddled with "murders and intrigues" amongst the invading people.<sup>46</sup> This declining state resulted in the migration of many Khamitian citizens, including craftsmen and scholars, from their country to more hospitable lands. Due to cultural contact between Khamitians and other African societies, Khamitian continuities can be found throughout African diasporic societies. The origin of a route used in ancient

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<sup>46</sup>J.C. de Graft-Johnson, African Glory: The Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations, with an afterword by John Henrik Clarke (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1986), 13.

times was the mid-Nile region and its destination point was the mid-Niger area. This trans-African path was used often by Africans in their migrational movements from East to West Africa . Many groups traveled this route and their beliefs and inventions came with them".<sup>47</sup>

Asa Hilliard has stressed that it is insightful to remark that researchers in Khamitian culture, particularly its spiritual aspects, are often motivated to study other African populations that are the descendants of the Khamitians or who share a common origin. This was previously discussed as a tool used by Amen. This was also noted in depth by E.A. Wallis Budge and also by Henri Frankfurt in his book, Kingship of the Gods. The essential relevance of this point is that there is an overwhelming abundance of evidential material to document the historical and cultural association between East Africa, including Khamit, and the rest of its continental and intercontinental diasporic population.<sup>48</sup> Amen has taken this research method one step further than the "orthodox" investigation by applying "readapted" initiatic wisdom into the Ausarian tradition as we shall demonstrate below.

It is not enough to study Khamit only from an intellectual perspective; one must make he effort to see it

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<sup>47</sup>Basil Davidson, The Lost Cities of Africa (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1959), 60.

<sup>48</sup>Hilliard, 89.

through the eyes of traditional Africa. In order to practice and apply the Khamitian sciences and ethic principles to aid humanity, one must acknowledge African traditions, continental and diasporic. The African worldview does not separate the sacred from the secular. Amen's teaching is consistent with this view of spiritual traditions; he has not divorced the material from the spiritual. He also retrieves and reintegrates practices adopted by Europeans and Asians into this system.<sup>49</sup>

The assertions of similarity between Khamitian and other religions have been made by many African-centered scholars. Runoko Rashidi has documented the Mohenjo Dara civilization of India and that of Sumeria as colonies of Khamit and further found that their inhabitants were not only African but their customs and practices paralleled those of the Khamitians.<sup>50</sup> Olumide Lucas, scholar of Yoruba religion, noted that the Yoruba people of Nigeria affirm ancestry in Northeast Africa and claim that their ancestors lived in Khamit before migrating to their present home in West Africa. Lucas observes:

Abundant proof of intimate connection between the ancient Egyptians and the Yoruba may be produced

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<sup>49</sup>Amen, Metu Neter: The Great Oracle, 2-7, 35-37.

<sup>50</sup>Runoko Rashidi, "Africans in Early Asian Civilization: A Historical Overview," in African Presence in Early Asia, eds. Ivan Van Sertima and Runoko Rashidi (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 15-19.

under this head. Most of the principal gods were well known, at one time, to the Yoruba. Among these gods are Osiris, Isis, Horus, Shu, Sut, Thoth, Khepera, Amon, Anu, Khonsu, Khopri, Hathor, Sokaris, Ra, Seb, the four elemental deities, and others. Most of the gods survive in name or in attributes or in both.<sup>51</sup>

Other similarities are to be found in languages, religious beliefs, costume and names of persons, places and things.<sup>52</sup> An example of a similarity is a comparison between two ithyphallic deities of the Khamitian and Yoruba traditions, respectively Heru and Shango. In the Yoruba customary art and dress the Orisha<sup>53</sup>, Shango is very often depicted with a very large penis and also shown with kutibas, which are large pants that droop in the seat, because it is said that Shango, as Amen expresses it, physically "outmans" ordinary men and is sexually well-endowed. This portrayal refers to the fiery sexual modality of Shango.<sup>54</sup> Compare this depiction with that of Heru who is described by the Egyptologist E.A. Wallis Budge:

As the god of generation and reproduction he


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<sup>51</sup>J. Olumide Lucas, The Religion of the Yorubas, quoted in Precolonial Black Africa, Cheikh Anta Diop (Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 216.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Awo Fá Lokun Fatunmbi, Awo: Ifá and the Theology of Orisha Divination (Bronx, New York: Original Publications, 1992), viii-ix.

<sup>54</sup>Amen, Metu Neter: The Great Oracle, 230.

appears as a hawk with a phallus terminating in the head of a lion, and in a scene of the late period he is represented with the body of a man and wings of a hawk, kneeling upon two crocodiles; on his head he wears a [hieroglyph of the sun], and in his left hand he holds a scorpion, .<sup>55</sup>

Amen acknowledged the testimony of history but seems to place more emphasis on the parallel practices of Africans in order to syncretize creatively the traditional theories and practices. The speculative process concerning the reestablishment of Khamitian spiritual practices is a mixture of historical and archaeological study and the inculcation of the metaphysical and spiritual traditions that are indigenously African or African in principle, wherever found. Thus the Ausar Auset Society's reclamation and restoration of African religion involves the study of related texts, that is both ancient Khamitian writings as well those of later, even present day scholarly commentary on the culture of Khamit: in keeping, however, with the society's stated objective of spiritual cultivation initiatic procedures are also an important part of its operational program.

Using this method, Amen came to the conclusion that in order to have a holistic worldview there had to be a proper model to explain Khamitian spirituality. The Paut Neteru, also known as the Kabala or Tree of life, is the blueprint

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<sup>55</sup>E.A. Wallis Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians: Studies in Egyptian Mythology, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1969), 474.

used by the Ausar Auset Society to map the functions of the Khamitian deity Amen's intermediaries known as the Neteru, which are similar to the Orisha and somewhat similar to the angels of the Judeo-Christian hagiology. Like most traditional African spiritual systems the Neteru participate in all of the activities of their devotees. In the spiritual tradition of Khamit, according to Amen, there were ten major spheres each one of which was governed by a specific archetypal deity. The Khamitian deities are: Amen, Ausar, Auset, Geb, Heru, Herukhuti, Het-Heru, Maat, Sebek, Sekert, and Tehuti. These deities are also faculties that correspond to the principles of Ausar Auset.<sup>56</sup>

According to the Khamitian tradition before any endeavor was considered, one had to be certain that one's actions were based upon righteousness and truth. In Khamitian cosmology, Maat is the representation of truth and righteousness and is depicted holding a feather and scales that symbolically weighed the heart to make sure the judged was just in actions and in thoughts. There were also forty two affirmations associated with her which the initiate would recite at the time of being judged. Khamitian proverbial retranslations by Karenga compiled in The Husia: Sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt provide insight concerning the lofty value system developed by the Khamitians. The affirmations were recited upon entering

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<sup>56</sup>Amen, Metu Neter Anuk Ausar, 82, 200-215.

a holy temple consecrated to the Goddess Maat.

I have not done evil against people. I have not mistreated my family and associates. I have not told lies in the court of law, the seat of Truth. I have not associated with evil or worthless people. I have not done evil things. I have not begun a day by demanding more than I was due. I have not brought forth my name for praise. I have not cursed God. I have not defrauded the poor of their property. I have not done what is hateful to God. I have not slandered a servant to his superior. I have not inflicted pain. I have not cause anyone to be hungry. I have not made anyone weep. I have not committed murder....<sup>57</sup>

This adherence to the Maatian requirement was a holistic means of attaining virtue. The ethics of Maat thus also assist one to achieve good in life. This is done by the development of the character. In Khamit, Maat was implicitly considered the law of the land and went well beyond desirable social conduct. In the spirit of history, the use of Maat is central to the liberation of African people worldwide.<sup>58</sup> The results of a deterioration in the social fabric of a society are tragic. This can be seen in the African American community. Advocates of Maat, as with other African traditions, encourage the welfare of the whole group. John Mbiti comments, "Whoever constantly or deliberately breaks his community morals eventually finds the community pushing him in

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<sup>57</sup>Maulana Karenga, comp., The Husia: Sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt (Los Angeles: Kawaida Publications, 1984), 109-110.

<sup>58</sup>Idem, "Towards A Sociology of Maatian Ethics: Literature and Context," in Egypt Revisited, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 391.

return." He observes further, "traditional African societies kept a close eye for any individual weeds in its moral life and often uprooted them before they turned human life into an immoral wasteland."<sup>59</sup>

As presented by Ra Un Nefer Amen in his writings, the means of directly communicating with spiritual agents like Maat vary. There is the "Oracle of Tehuti" which is a divination system comprised of seventy cards and provides the inquirer with a means of understanding what particular "aspect" of the Creator is governing a situation or event. Unlike the well known Tarot deck of cards, the "Oracle of Tehuti" provides a means of creating a personalized spiritual curriculum because adherents to the Ausarian tradition are not all necessarily at the same point of development. Once divination is performed, words of power or mantras (sound vibrations) that correspond to each sphere in the Paut Neteru are employed to bring about the desired results. In the esoteric understanding that is inherent in Khamitian religion, everything has a rate of vibration that produces a sound or a color on some level. The maxim is to find out the sound with which a certain object or situation is endowed since by knowing this one is enabled to gain mastery over that thing or

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<sup>59</sup>John S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann International Books and Literature, 1975), 180-181.



situation.<sup>60</sup> Similarly it should be noted in many traditional African societies, spirit-beings, even the least of them, by the power of the spoken word obtain mastery "over everything, over animal and plant, stone and hammer, moon and stars". According to the power or vital force of the utterance issuing from the spirit being, there are varying results. The verbal power of a deity like the Dogon Amma, the Yoruba Olorun and the Haitian Bon Dieu exceeds that of a living or dead human being.<sup>61</sup>

Additionally, there are certain colors and chants prescribed by Khamitian spiritualists which when coupled with certain visualizations and breathing patterns, enable the student over time to achieve the desired goals in a disciplined manner. Colors are considered vibrations as are verbal manifestations. Each Neter has its sacred colors which correspond to the vibration of that particular energy.

Meditation when practiced according to the theosophical teachings, leads to a natural altered state of consciousness and relaxation. The major means of "contacting" these energies is through the use of "words of power" or mantras that are master vibrational codes that aid the practitioner to tap into the desired archetype. By repetition of this word,

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<sup>60</sup>Amen, Metu Neter: The Great Oracle, 80.

<sup>61</sup>Janheinz Jahn, Muntu: African Culture and the Western World (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 133.

one essentially 'becomes' the sub-god. Amen quotes Arthur Avalon's Serpent Power:

Each man is Shiva (a deity-Ausar), and can attain his power to the degree of his ability to consciously realize himself as such. For various purposes the Devata (deities) are invoked. Mantra (a word of power) and Devata are one in the same...By practice (japa) with the mantra the presence of the Devata is invoked. Japa or repetition of the mantra is compared to the action of a man shaking a sleeper to wake him up.<sup>62</sup>

Members of the Ausar Auset Society are self-defined using Khamitian names which translate into mantras that awaken the innermost self that is the deity within. The name, or in Khamitian terms, Ren, is the highest aspect of spirit-consciousness. It is a divine soul or in Khamitian terms the Ka. When spoken it acts in the same manner as the words of power used in meditation.<sup>63</sup>

In present day Egypt, surviving from its time as Khamit, there are many temples and monuments such as the pyramids that are actually great altars to the deceased that were erected in their honor. The assumptions of many Westerner outsiders to the Khamitian tradition tend to characterize these African beliefs associated with such artifacts as animistic, pagan or

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<sup>62</sup>Arthur Avalon, Serpent Power, quoted in Ra Un Nefer Amen, Metu Neter: The Great Oracle of Tehuti and the Egyptian System of Spiritual Cultivation (Bronx, NY: Khamit Corp., 1990), 87.

<sup>63</sup>Isha Schwaller de Lubicz, The Opening of the Way: A Practical Guide to the Wisdom Teachings of Ancient Egypt (Rochester, NY: Inner Traditions International, 1981), 34.

simply bizarre. Janheinz Jahn, in Muntu, quotes the author Ulli Beier in his comment on ancestor<sup>64</sup> veneration:

'A man who is told by the Ifa oracle to worship one of his ancestors does not himself become an Egungun worshipper. Instead he has a mask made and presents it to the Alagba, the head of the Egungun, asking him to find a dancer. During the ceremony the ancestor will take possession of the dancer, and speak to his relatives whilst using the dancer as a medium.' The difference is clear: a worshipper who dances an orisha becomes the orisha for the period of his 'possession', while the masked dancer, instead of becoming the dead man, remains a dancer and only 'lends' the dead man his voice and gestures. He is not the other person but represents him; he is an actor.<sup>65</sup>

Many traditional African societies have some means of communicating with the ancestors of their particular clan or ethnic group. In fact, it is through ritual and invocation of the ancestors and the deities that guidance concerning spiritual matters is obtained and substantiated. This procedure has provided a grand array of possibilities for the African-centered perspective concerning Khamit.

Ancestral ties of Africans in America are difficult if not impossible to trace to any particular African nation. The

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<sup>64</sup>Ancestors are the deceased beings of various clans and nations that continue to play a significant role in guiding societies and participating in the lives of humans. Enlightened ancestors in the Khamitian tradition are known as Sheps or in the plural Shepsu. See Rkhty Wimby Amen, "The Philosophy of Kemetic Spirituality," in Reconstructing Kemetic Culture: Papers, Perspectives, Projects, ed. Maulana Karenga (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1990), 119.

<sup>65</sup>Jahn, 69-70.

repossession by Africans in America of Khamitian tradition provides prestigious ancestral connections for this group of people who have been believed by some to be without historical ancestral ties as a result of their forced migration from their homeland.

The ancestral spiritual communication ceremonies offered by the Ausar Auset society affirm the Khamitian concept of the afterlife. This viewpoint provides Africans in the Western hemisphere an alternative ways of seeing death. A society that perceives death as a transitional phase back to life functions in terms not of time but eternity. This point can be seen in art forms, religious beliefs and architecture of the Khamitians who viewed these manifestations of their society as eternal. This accounts for the optimism and vitality that permeates Khamitian beliefs and practices and leads one to the idea "that to the human spirit all things are possible."<sup>66</sup>

It is also important to note that discarnate ancestors that are not spiritually developed yet participate in the affairs of humans are referred to as dark deceased beings.

As has been indicated in the foregoing, the earliest advocates of Nile Valley ties to Africans in bondage in America, such as Prince Hall and Martin Delany, expressed the

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<sup>66</sup>Joseph Kaster, The Wisdom of Ancient Egypt: Writing From the Time of the Pharaohs (New York: Barnes and Noble Press, 1993), 38-39.

opinion that Khamitian spiritual forces were available to intervene in the affairs and destiny of Africans in distress. Spiritual Africanisms in Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti and South and Central America have endured the brutality of the forced servitude era. In North America, the Georgia and Carolina Sea Islands are the focus of scholarly research for information on Africanisms. According to Dona Richards, the Sea Islands are rich in ethnic traditions. She also notes that Africans in America lack a cosmological framework for understanding the larger African world experience. Richards notes, "many of these [Gullah and Sea Island] retentions have been well examined... and they do not help to explain how all of us [Africans] are African."<sup>67</sup> During enslavement, drumming and marriage ceremonies were outlawed because they were seen by European American Protestants and Puritans as a threat to the existing system of forced servitude. This resulted in a destruction of many aspects of African culture brought to America. Without the rhythm of the drum, African divinities could not be invoked, thereby thwarting traditional methods of spiritual development of enslaved Africans. Christianity was the vehicle by which the potent pantheon of divinities with which many enslaved Africans were familiar was transformed into a single alien and evidently hostile almighty power. The

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<sup>67</sup>Richards, Dona M. Let the Circle Be Unbroken: The Implications of African Spirituality in the Diaspora, (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1998), 3.

uni-dimensional archetype of Christianity contrasts with the African pantheon in that religious adherents are moved by a "mass ecstasy" of the only begotten son opposed to the African deities.<sup>68</sup> However, Maroon communities persisted and continued to grow and develop spiritually even after legal bondage ended.<sup>69</sup>

Mbiti notes that the African world the religious traditions of Africa are pragmatic in that they adapt to the situations as the necessity to do so emerges. Adherents of African traditional religions are not bound by a single prophet or authority and in times of extreme danger or trouble, the spiritual activities meet the needs of the people.<sup>70</sup> According to Anthony C.F. Wallis:

Every person in a society maintains a mental image of that society and its culture. His conception of the total social complex, involving his own person and the object of his environment, both human and nonhuman provides a mazeway of experience through which he moves; and this movement must be free and unimpeded in order for him to function in that society. Once this mazeway is mastered by the individual, he functions unconsciously as a member of that society. However, should his mazeway become blocked, he must seek alternative paths through life that make it possible for him to

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<sup>68</sup>Jahn, 217-219.; Richards, 3.

<sup>69</sup>Mavis C. Campbell, The Maroons of Jamaica 1655-1796, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1990), 1.

<sup>70</sup>Mbiti, 14-16.

continue to function in his culture.<sup>71</sup>

Through the Ausar Auset Society Africans have been successful in transforming extant material concerning Khamit into a functional model based upon many unforgotten traditional African beliefs and practices. What Wallace described as "alternative paths" has become for many African Americans the recovered Khamitian tradition.

The development of the Khamitian tradition in the African World community deserves the same inquiry that scholars provide for the traditions of Candomblé, Santeria, Shango, JuJu, and Vodun. Thus, the reclamation and adherence to the Ausarian tradition by Africans in America is a form of intellectual and spiritual maronage. While the purpose of Christianity was to reduce enslaved Africans to docile human beings through the absence of self definition and the lack of self determination, Africans maintained their Africanity and cloaked it within Christianity out of survival necessity. In fact a number of the leaders of militancy and outright rebellion on the part of the Africans were Christian preachers. Increasingly over the years Africans have used Christianity-related information to reestablish traditions of spiritual resistance and create liberation theologies and

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<sup>71</sup>Anthony C.F. Wallace quoted by Leonard Barrett in "African Religion in the Americas: The "Islands in Between," in African Religions, ed. Newell S. Booth, (New York: Nok Publishers, 1977), 189.

practices beyond the intended purpose of that information. Unlike former African religious practices in America, the Ausarian tradition, as represented by the Ausar Auset Society, emerged at a time when it did not have to cloak its true identity in Christianity or other doctrines of European slavemasters.

Although the cosmological aspects used by Amen have emerged much later than the other syncretic traditions, the adaptation of the Ausar Auset Society to the required situation has occurred. As Roger Bastide asserts in reference to other African Maroon societies like Palmares, "...we are dealing with 'tribal regression,' a kind of return to Africa."<sup>72</sup>

More than any other single factor, African religious belief provided African people with a unifying force, a rallying point for mobilization, motivation, and inspiration. These factors continue to be the necessities of the African world community. Historically, resistance leaders are expected, by tradition, to have insight and knowledge on supernatural forces, among other skills. The Khamitian spiritual tradition developed by Amen illustrates this use of transcendental knowledge for the benefit of the African World community.

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<sup>72</sup>Roger Bastide, quoted by Mavis C. Campbell, The Maroons of Jamaica 1655-1796 (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, Inc., 1990), 3-4.



The information presented in the brief overview of Khamitian theology appearing in the foregoing allows one to see the values inherent in its philosophy and practice which can aid Africans in combatting their social and physical ills through the retention, amplification and ultimately complete acceptance of Africanism in the Diaspora. In addition, as this thesis has sought to show, through Khamitian spirituality societal ills of the African community in America can be effectively dealt with by following relevant and positive concepts. The impact of Khamitian teachings is not unlike that of Candomblé, Shango, Santeria and other African based creolized traditions. The use of ritual, drumming, dancing, chanting, deity possession, and the honoring ancestors and are all vital to the maintenance of the Khamitian tradition and to Africans in America quest for the ultimate liberation of the African World community.

## CONCLUSION

The distinctive Africanisms seen in the Ausar Auset Society as presented by Amen will seem new in many circles of African scholars and others. In this thesis it has been asserted that Khamitian culture was African, consequently, all of its lore, rituals and practices are Africanisms. The necessity for Africans in America to claim and assert their connection with Khamit is a form of resistance in the continuing struggle which they are involved. As we have seen there was a early consciousness of this struggle and the utility of Khamitian precepts in maintaining the humanity of African people. The Ausar Auset Society is one example of that conscious of and interest in Khamit which is perceived to be strong efficacious in the restoration and maintenance of the human dignity of African people and a basis of peace and concord among all people. The appeal is to the highest conduct of which human beings can conceive. The founder of the Ausar Auset Society has articulated the ages old challenge to African people by pointing out the ancestral insights deriving from Khamit and the forces against which Africans had to mount resistance:

Our ancestors in Kamit (ancient Egypt) developed a profound insight into Man's psychological (spiritual) evolution, the culmination of which they symbolize as the god Ausar. Unlike western

behavior shaping systems which are based on Man's lower being with its animalistic, and lower intellectual faculties (even those these have given us super computers and satellites), the ancient African civilizations based their behavior shaping system-religious initiation-on the higher parts of Man's being wherein reside the divine elements that created him/her and administer his/her life. While the western system foster all kinds of behavior that cater to and strengthen the lower part of being, the African systems seek to elevate Man to his divine essence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ra Un Nefer Amen, Metu Neter Anuk Ausar: The Kamitic Initiatic System, vol. 2 (Brooklyn, NY: Khamit Corporation, 1994), 9.

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